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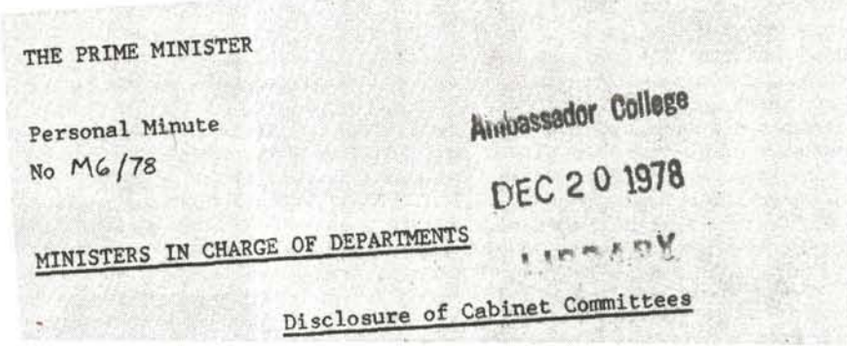
NEW STATESMAN

Revealed:
The text of the Prime Minister's memo on Cabinet Committees



THE PRIME MINISTER

Personal Minute
No M6/78

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MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF DEPARTMENTS

Disclosure of Cabinet Committees

E. P. Thompson
Blackmail and the secret state

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The flawed idealism of Robert Kennedy

Can the Queen really go to Iran?

In her gracious address to her Lords and Members of the House of Commons, Her Majesty the Queen announced her intention of visiting Iran. It would be interesting to know which of her advisors now thinks this is a good idea. If we take the deployment of the Queen as emblematic of a Foreign Office seal of approval, and note in passing that the Shah is now, belatedly, being praised for undoing all the things which have sustained him so far, the question develops an added point. Not by any means for the first time, our 'professionals' have backed the wrong horse, watched him get into a hopeless corner with his own people and then recommended him afresh on the grounds that there is no alternative.

The Shah has succeeded only temporarily in decapitating the opposition and scattering its forces into exile or prison. It will not do to argue that because he controls a lake of oil and some vital straits at Hormus he must be kept sweet. If the oil and straits are so vital, it is obviously better that they should not be vested in the gift of an unpopular megalomaniac. The British used to say of Nuri es-Said in neighbouring Iraq that, vile though he was in many ways, he made a good steward for Western Interests. Nuri ended up dragged through the streets – we lost more than an Embassy that time.

The argument about religious freedom and democratic liberties is complete on its own terms and has been so for some time. There is nothing about Iranians which can justify any British socialist demanding less for them than he would for himself. (Iranian socialists must now boycott the Socialist International in protest against David Owen's remarks.) But since the argument is being couched in terms of 'intelligent self interest' it should not seem as if socialists neglect the point.

Plainly, the Shah was a bad bet from the start, and the NEW STATESMAN cannot be accused of saying this with hindsight. Equally plain, his difficulties are now so acute that he can only survive by becoming either a total military dictator (in which case certain remarks about liberalisation are going to look a bit sick) or by abdicating. In either case, it will be a matter of expediency as well as principle for the democracies to be on good terms with his opponents. A chronic unwillingness to differ from Washington on any detail of foreign policy has ensured that our Labour government has slammed this door as rudely as possibly.

Is there 'no alternative' for Britain to playing the pilot fish and the bag-carrier for American power? Can anybody remember the last time that this policy was successful? Portugal or Greece, perhaps? When Bhutto is threatened with judicial murder by a wave of real Islamic backwardness, we do nothing. While Saudi Arabia is ruled by the most gruesome imaginable system of Koranic law, we do and say nothing. When an obviously discredited despot is attacked by every shade of Iranian opinion we publicly insult their courage and their convictions by calling them Islamic fanatics. It will not do, and Dr Owen has touched bottom by pretending that it will.

Probably he and his advisors (the British ambassador having been forced to take refuge with the French) think that they are being tough and Machiavellian, taking the hard, unpopular decisions while others carp. Here is what Machiavelli himself had to say on this old problem:

> Every government, whether it be republican or of the princely type, should consider beforehand what adverse times may befall and on what people it may have to rely in time of adversity . . . a government which acts otherwise – whether it be a prince or a republic, but especially if it be a prince – a government which thinks that it is only when danger has arisen that it should win men over by conferring of benefits, is mistaken; for not only will it fail to win them over, but it will hasten its own ruin.

When this has happened in Iran, will it teach the Foreign Office and the Foreign Secretary anything? Not if past and present are anything to go by.

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Notes on Politics and Power

Bingham and Benn

Christopher Hitchens writes: Even if his government pulls through the vote on the Queen's Speech (by the grace of Enoch Powell), the Prime Minister will have to live with the consequences of three related developments this week. Taken together, they give quite a sound indication of the Callaghan style of government. The three episodes are the burying of the Bingham revelations, the disciplining of Brian Sedgemore and the non-response to a Labour Party demand for accountability in the security system.

The main feature of the Rhodesian debate was not the rambling and pathetic performance of Sir Harold Wilson, which only slightly widened the gap between his own account and that of Michael Stewart and George Thomson. It was the fact that the party managers had succeeded in subsuming any real debate on Bingham into a general waffle under several headings; from arms for Zambia to all-party talks and the renewal of 'sanctions'. Only one indication emerged of any future lines of inquiry, and that was almost in passing – when Dr Jeremy Bray accused civil servants in his old Ministry (Power) of putting oil companies before the government in their policy. The now-closed files of the Ministry of Power are destined to play quite a role in any future probe, and this was the first Parliamentary indication of their importance.

Meanwhile, Mr Brian Sedgemore was fending off conflicting stories about his own position as PPS to Tony Benn. Denis Healey was less than delighted, while appearing before a Commons committee on the European Monetary System, to be questioned by somebody who actually knew what the Treasury view of the matter was, and it was becoming clear that Callaghan would remove the offender from office. Coming as it did in a week which had been alive with leaks and rumours from the Cabinet about who stood where on EMS, Sedgemore's revelation in committee was a challenge to the monopoly on leaking enjoyed by the 'insiders'. The authenticity of the document, which spoke of adverse effects on trade, productivity and employment, has not been denied. But in such cases Callaghan is interested in the singer and not the song. His prompt action made a bold contrast with his infinite capacity for procrastination on every other occasion, including the suggestion that our security services might be brought under some kind of public scrutiny. This trespassing on holy ground also involved members of the Benn camp on Labour's Home Policy Committee, and there are some who say that Callaghan has this week done to Benn's PPS what he would really like to do to Benn himself.

A fairly pivotal role now devolves on Michael English, the Labour MP for Nottingham and the chairman of the relevant sub-committee of the Commons Expenditure Committee. He is in a position to take two initiatives – the first being to back up Sedgemore's demand that the Treasury cease concealing information from Parliament while making it available inside government. The second concerns the recovery by Parliament of control over the Bingham inquiry. Since it was Parliament that was deceived by the civil service there, it will be difficult for English to do less than Wilson did and fail to call for 'persons and papers'.

Alarmed by the revelations of surveillance and interference which have emerged from the great fiasco at the Old Bailey, the Home Policy

Brian Sedgemore and Michael English

Committee has decided to press for an inquiry into security and in the meantime to press ahead with an unofficial one of its own. The point of departure here is the antiquity of statistics relating to telephone tapping by the State; statistics which have not been updated since 1957. Mr Benn and his colleagues take the view that if the matter could be discussed then it can be discussed now without any 'threat to security' being posed. Such things as the increased size and activity of the Special Branch since that date would also be covered. Mr Callaghan, as nominal head of the security services, is not best pleased. He has had to remind Tony Benn already this month that collective responsibility in Cabinet also extends to meetings of party and trade union bodies.

Together, these three 'encounters' between the executive and the back and front benches represent a victory for the principle of demarcation – a subject is not truly ventilated unless it is ventilated by somebody authorised to do so – and the practice of obfuscation.

More trouble at The Times

Patrick Wintour writes: As the threat of suspension of publication on 30 November still hangs over Times Newspapers Ltd., an internal senior management document has come into the hands of the NS which shows both the management's plight as they tackle new technology and also their falsification of information presented to the unions during negotiations over staffing. The discussion paper prepared by the Project Department was produced a fortnight ago to assist in the further development of training policy for the introduction of new technology on the Times supplements. It points out that Systems Development Corporation of California, the firm producing the computer system, 'now requires TNL to enter a contractual agreement on training and if we are not ready' on 29 January because of the 'industrial relations situation . . . we not only loose a great deal of money but are unlikely to be able to get the trainers over to London when we require them. We could be in the dreadful situation where final agreement is reached with the unions but we can't even start training; let alone go into production'. To avoid at least a costly breach of contract, the document proposes that if the lock-out is continuing the managers and TNL instructors should take up the training places.

A further problem is that SDC 'provides a two week Text 11 Software course at Santa Monica but the participants need to be trained in Fortran IV' (a high level computer language), 'DOS 111' (an operating system) 'and HP Assembler' (another computer language). 'There is a problem with DOS 111 in that we understand that DOS 111 courses are no longer being run and are replaced by RTE (Real Time Executive) courses which are of no value to us. It will therefore be necessary for the computer room manager and deputy to provide this training.' The section goes on to say that this should present no problem. Yet elsewhere the document argues: 'It should be noted that neither the computer room manager nor his deputy have ever received formal training and have learnt about Text 11 by reading and by a general process of "osmosis" (a situation that exists for almost everyone involved in this project).' Whether osmosis will be enough to handle the disc operating system (DOS) without prohibitive delay or expense is a subject of controversy among experts.

Also in the document is a useful index of the honesty with which the management have approached the negotiations with the unions. A table details both the number of NGA staff that will be required to produce the three Times supplements and the number to be trained. The excess of trainees over the number actually required is, reasonably, two comps and two readers. But underneath the document adds: 'The above figures are based on George Vowle's (the head printer) actual requirements and are therefore different from the figures presented to the NGA for negotiation purposes. It is very important that, for public consumption, we discount these figures to make them consistent with the negotiation figures, or explain that we are training more staff than we actually need for production'. What else is discounted for public consumption?

Shah heads for confrontation

Robert Graham writes: There has always been a strong element of hubris about the Shah. On his own admission, he believes his occupancy of the Peacock Throne is divinely inspired, and divinely inspired leaders tend to have an indifferent track record in recognising their own shortcomings. For the first time last Sunday, when the Shah made a surprise radio broadcast, after accepting the resignation of his second Prime Minister in ten weeks, and with unprecedented violence erupting in the streets, one detected a note of remorse.

The man is essentially ambivalent. He would like to take the nation into his confidence. But his Olympian conception of the role and powers of monarchy makes him instinctively reject the Opposition's demands. So any change he now promises, even if it is genuine, appears cosmetic. It is too late for him to act like a chastened King Lear. The Cordelias – the bourgeois moderates he could have dealt with two years ago – have either left the country, or been swept aside.

The country is now lurching towards a direct confrontation. It is no longer a question – as some of the Shah's supporters, including the United States and British governments,

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imagine – of establishing 'the Shah plus democracy.' The question is how the Shah stays – or how he goes.

The Shah has manoeuvred himself – or has been manoeuvred – into a dangerous impasse. Generals occupy all important cabinet portfolios. Martial law is in effect in all the main cities. This can solve nothing. Elections and reforms are promised *after* order is restored. But the exiled Shi'ite leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, still insists on the removal of the Shah as a precondition of any political initiative. And this seems to have been endorsed by Dr Karim Sanjabi, leader of the National Front. This, the old Mossadegh nationalist and socialist party, is the main opposition political party.

In mid-1977 the Shah missed a vital chance of reaching an accommodation with the then illegal opposition that was just beginning to challenge his authority. Sanjabi and two colleagues wrote a letter to the Shah demanding an end to arbitrary rule and the restoration of democracy. It was then considered a measure of liberalisation that the authors did not end up in jail. But nothing was done about the letter's demands – which now seem a reasonable basis for compromise between the Shah and the politicians. It was almost another eighteen months before the Shah conceded measures that could have headed off a confrontation: the end of the one party system, and of press censorship, the sacking of General Nasiri, head of SAVAK, the release of political prisoners, and the formation of a government of 'national reconciliation'. It was too late.

The situation is now complicated by the involvement of the military. They persuaded the Shah to declare martial law, probably against his better judgment. The Shah subsequently persuaded the military to maintain a low profile in the streets. But the failure of this policy was self-evident after last Sunday.

The Shah seems to have tried to find an alternative to military government. He even sounded out the veteran former prime minister, Ali Amini: the two men hate each other. But Amini asked for control over the military, and the military weren't having that, any more than they could accept a return of the mullahs.

In Paris, Ayatollah Khomeini refuses to be impressed either by the Shah's overtures or even by the efforts of the political opposition to tone down his inflammatory pronouncements. He has good reason not to budge. He has been insulted and imprisoned by the Shah. He has suffered a long exile in Iraq, and seen his followers persecuted in Iran. Now he has acquired a unique historic legitimacy, and he is exploiting it to the full. He knows he has the allegiance of the crowd. The loose coalition of opposition forces must follow him if it is to stay united – however much its members may distrust his plans for installing a theocracy in modern Iran.

Things must get worse before they get better. The democratic forces in the opposition are fragmented. And political repression has given religion a new legitimacy. Even the Shah's resignation would solve little: it would leave the military confronting the mullahs.

The Western governments argue that, once the Shah goes, chaos will follow. They overlook one crucial fact. Because they have supported an intensely personal system of power for more than a decade, they have no guarantee of a stable transition even if the Shah were to hand over his throne to his teenage son, or to a council of regency. Indeed, by identifying so closely with an autocratic government in Iran, and not with the State of Iran, the West has increased the probability of an unstable transfer of power: precisely what is most feared by those who are concerned with oil, and the containment of the Soviet Union. Hard as it may be to stomach, the long years of stable oil supplies and profitable contracts must now be traded in for a period of instability while Iran decides its own future.

Robert Graham was formerly the *Financial Times* correspondent in Tehran and is the author of *Iran: the Illusion of Power*.

Mulder made the fall guy

Roger Omond writes: Tuesday night's sudden resignation of the embattled Dr Connie Mulder, the man at the centre of the South African slush funds row, shows that Afrikanerdom is not above finding a scapegoat, even one as powerful as the Transvaal leader of the National Party. In effect, Mulder has been forced to carry the can for the sins of others as well as his own. Few believe that his Department of Information misused public money to establish a pro-government newspaper, *The Citizen*, without higher authorisation. Informed rumours a few hours before Mulder resigned were that he had evidence – perhaps even the document – showing that the new Prime Minister, P. W. Botha, who controlled and still controls the Department of Defence, knew very well what was happening to the money. It came orginally, according to informants, from the Department of Defence, was laundered through a Swiss bank and then went to the Department of Information to finance *The Citizen*. It is almost inconceivable that Botha, who built up Defence into his own £1,000 million empire, would have parted with a cent unless he knew for what it was destined. But Botha has managed to survive – at least for the present. If the Commission of Inquiry, which must report before parliament reconvenes on 7 December, does its work properly, however, other senior government leaders may still be implicated in the misuse of public money. But for the moment Mulder is the sacrificial lamb which has been slaughtered.

Free Speech

Now we can stop propping up the Bar

He saw a lawyer killing a viper
On a dunghill hard by his own stable;
And the Devil smiled, for it put him in mind
Of Cain, and his brother Abel.

Very likely, Coleridge was feeling the after-effects of litigation when he wrote this particular passage of *The Devil's Walk*: the statement, though, is unusual only for the whiplash effect of the double-take, and not for the general attitude expressed. Neither in literary language nor in common speech do you find much said in praise of lawyers.

A chief source of our resentments – which the House of Lords, not without reluctance, began to ameliorate last week – lies in the extraordinary professional immunities which lawyers have long enjoyed. Until their Lordships pronounced in *Saif Ali v Sidney Mitchell & Co* it appeared that a barrister could not be sued for negligence, no matter what blunders he might inflict on his client in the course of litigation. From this flowed another immunity, only dimly understood but nonetheless resented in action. A solicitor, in theory, *could* be sued by a dissatisfied client. But it was thought to be a complete defence for the solicitor to show that his actions, however inane, were based upon the advice of a barrister.

It is not so long since this structure of immunities was justified by the argument that barristers' fees are only honoraria, and not contractually-enforceable debts – a thought which any veteran of litigation will recognise as stretching the concept of 'legal fiction' well beyond the limits it can bear.

There is, and always has been, a good argument for saying that barristers must have some immunity from possible errors committed in the court-room. Otherwise, the main business of the courts would become the infinite re-trial of cases at the insistence of aggrieved and unsuccessful parties. But advice and preparation is another matter, and Lord Salmon said last week that he

'could not understand how there could be any justification for the law affording a blanket immunity to a barrister in respect of work done out of court when it afforded none to the members of any other profession'.

Quite so, my lord: most of us have been quite unable to understand why it took so long to say so. But does not this much-desired reform open the way to another salutary improvement? Does any justification remain for the restrictive practice – almost unique to this country – which separates barristers and solicitors, to the great disadvantage of the customers?

As Lord Wilberforce said, the usual reason a solicitor tows his client along to see a barrister is that the case has reached the point where judgment must be exercised. The client, no doubt, imagines he is paying the extra money to get a superior level of advice. Well, sometimes – but all too often what he has tended to get is the same advice the solicitor would have given, but with the difference that it costs more and he can't do anything about it if the lawyers happen to be carelessly mistaken. (Of course, there is the argument that barristers must be involved wherever a court appearance may eventually be necessary, but this bears no examination at all. Particularly outside London, many solicitors' firms have partners who do nothing but court appearances, in the large areas of law where solicitors now have right of audience.)

Now that *Saif Ali v Sydney Mitchell* has turned the lawyers – almost – into mortal beings, it's surely time for the Law Society and the Bar Council to get together and let them work for their clients without restriction. There will, of course, still be specialist advocates for the big and complex cases, just as there are in every country where the legal professions have been amalgamated. But it would mean an end to the trouble and expense of chasing off to the Temple to get 'counsel's opinion' of judgments that every competent solicitor ought to be able to provide directly to his clients.

Bruce Page

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Czech socialists appeal to their friends in the West

Czech socialists have put the German government on the spot. This April 23 members of the Czech dissident group 'Charter 1977' released a statement *One Hundred Years of Czech Socialism*, which argued that Czechoslovakia's socialist traditions went back much further than the formation of the Communist Party. The signatories of the document took 'personal responsibility for the implementation of (socialist) principles', which the Communist Party was not honouring. The document was thus one of the first signs of an independent political grouping in Czechoslovakia which was not composed of dissidents within the Party. A few days after the publication of the document, police raided the flats of some of the signatories; detained and interrogated them. In July the group wrote to the Socialist International whom they regarded as 'the most significant political entity of democratic socialism'. Their letter is reprinted below.

The Socialist International, chaired by Willy Brandt, has now recommended that one of the member-parties of the International should mount a special conference on Czechoslovakia. The question is, which one? The dissident Czechs would like the West Germans themselves to take on the task. Brandt himself, and many members of the SPD, may well be sympathetic to such a proposal. But it would raise intense diplomatic problems for Helmut Schmidt and the SPD in power: a centrepiece of Schmidt's foreign policy -- inherited, of course, from Brandt himself – is the steady improvement of relations with the Communist governments of Eastern Europe. If, however, the SPD declines the task, the conference will still be staged: already, both the Italian Socialists and Social Democrats have made clear that they are willing.

Dear Sirs,

We has long felt the need for political contact between Czechoslovak Socialists and the Socialist International. We are now writing to inform you about our position and endeavours. We are doing this in accordance with Art. 28 of the Czechoslovak Constitution and Art. 2, 19, 21 and 22 of the International Covenant on Human and Political Rights, which is part of the Czechoslovak legal norms.

Historically we do not directly link up with any political groupings as they existed in our country prior to 1948. We consider East European experience of the past thirty years to be the most decisive for us. The political objectives which we are pursuing as independent Socialists are based on the values also guiding the parties of the Socialist International. At the same time we realise that the Socialist International permits the free formulation of political ideas and views without demanding strict subordination to canonised principles.

It is, of course, well known that the possibilities and conditions of our activities, just as those of Socialists in the other East European countries, differ substantially from your own.

IN OUR COUNTRY the socialists have traditionally been among persecuted citizens no doubt because their idea of a consistent link between social justice and personal freedom has an exceptionally strong social backing. It remains a lasting paradox that at a time when the representatives of the political leadership of the State stress the need for contacts, cooperation and agreements with socialist and social democratic parties in international political relations, persecution of Socialists at home is being stepped up. At the beginning of April 1978 President Dr Gustav Husák met SPD Chairman Willy Brandt in Germany. At the same time police repression was used against a number of persons in connection with the declaration *One Hundred Years of Czech Socialism* which had been drawn up at the initiative of independent Socialists. We informed the Socialist International about the matter in two open letters. The joint declaration issued during the meeting between L. I. Brezhnev and G. Husák in Prague at the end of May 1978 also stressed the significance of cooperation with socialist and social democratic parties. But this was accompanied by the particularly outrageous preventive arrest of several dozen citizens. The repression of Socialists and citizens cooperating with them is illustrated by the proposed detention of Rudolf Battek, 53, an independent Socialist, Albert Černý, 40, an independent Socialist and the detention of the writer Jiri Crůsa, 40, Pavel Roubal, 30, and the Protestant clergyman Jan Simsa, 49, a signatory of *One Hundred Years of Czech Socialism.*

The absence of an institution of our own and of foreign contacts has for several decades virtually prevented supporters of a Socialist orientation from getting to know each other. This puts us in a radically different position from that of reform Communists or Christians in Czechoslovakia. Another limiting factor is the extremely restricted possibility of communication between politically non-conformist citizens and the public.

Independent political organisations are not allowed to be formed in Czechoslovakia. The State Security Service interprets every repeated meeting of people who are known to hold non-conformist views as organised and thus potentially criminal activity; citizens may be punished for expressing views which do not correspond to the ideas of the régime. From the point of view of current legal practice every expression of non-conformist civic activity is subject to the threat of legal prosecution and arrest.

THE POLICY OF DETENTE, the Helsinki document and the ratification of two international covenants on human rights by the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly have created a merely formal basis for extra-Governmental civic initiative. But even on such a restricted basis a certain scope for political action has been created. We believe that its preservation depends directly on the progress of international relations, on the consistency with which the Western States advocate and solve problems of human rights within the policy of detente. It also depends, naturally, on the orientation of Soviet foreign policy.

Despite the régime's efforts to limit it, civic activity within this political scope is varied and dynamic – ranging from the activities of individuals and groups, to the broader movement of Charter 77; and from the stabilisation of the non-Communist and Communist opposition and the dissemination of their statements, to the development of non-conformist culture.

UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES independent Socialists consider it their fundamental task to initiate a new ideological orientation going beyond traditional group interests. This is assisted by the search for a common approach of Socialists and democratically orientated Communists to the relationship between the political and economic systems. Closer links between Christians and Socialists in assessing individual and institutional responsibility on questions of human values are of equal importance.

Our fundamental task is to publish alternative ideas on the organisation of society and to promote non-conformist cultural activities.

Internationally our most important objective is to establish contacts with the Socialist International as the most significant political entity of democratic socialism and with Socialists in other East European countries.

We are striving to ensure that the régime in Czechoslovakia should respect legal civic initiative. As signatories of Charter 77 we participate in its offer of a constructive dialogue. Wherever human rights are not observed and civil liberties are not respected we express our legal opposition based on the Czechoslovak Constitution and the International Covenants of Human Rights.

We stand by the following principles:

1. We are not linked to any political grouping of the past. Party affiliation or allegiance to historical ideological sources are not of decisive importance.
2. We subscribe to the traditions of the workers' movement – to its socio-political and socialist demands. We feel we are also linked with the current progressive demands of the Czech intelligentsia and its democratic representatives.
3. We maintain that efforts to reform social conditions, towards an increasingly comprehensive democratisation of society, do not require a closed ideological concept or a rigid political organisation.
4. We sympathise with ideas of direct political activity of citizens free from the omnipotent apparatus of political parties but we are also aware that in the present phase of history the function and purpose of political organisations cannot be ignored.
5. We stand for democracy, socialism, equality, solidarity, self-management and self-determination of the peoples. Our task is to restore simple ethical principles to politics.
6. We want no more and no less than the rights and possibilities available to Communists and Communist parties in West European countries.
7. We cannot forgo the right to turn to friendly political institutions and express international solidarity to all who are victims of political, social, racial, national and religious oppression.

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1st July 1978

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Why James Callaghan wants to keep Cabinet committees secret

In the New Statesman last July, Bruce Page described the 'secret constitution' of Cabinet committees, which officially do not exist. The Prime Minister gave his own explanation of why they must remain a mystery in a personal minute to Ministers last February. News of the minute was leaked shortly afterwards, but the impression was given that it represented a liberal approach: having diligently examined the pros and cons of disclosure, Mr Callaghan had come down, with statesmanlike reluctance, on the side of continued secrecy. The text of the minute, published here for the first time, reveals quite a different stance: no matter what the arguments in favour of disclosure, Callaghan is just not having it.

The relationship between secrecy and Prime Ministerial authority is made plain. Revealing the names of Ministers who chair committees would, Callaghan notes, 'make it harder for me to make changes'. And troublesome MPs on Parliamentary Select Committees might want to question the chairmen, once they knew who they were.

There is a nod towards the (dubious) theory that secrecy is necessary to collective responsibility. But the real reasons are more coldly political: people might think a subject neglected if they knew it had no cabinet committee looking after it; knowledge of a committee's existence could reveal that 'very sensitive subjects were under consideration'. Most important, disclosure would 'whet appetites' for even more information.

THE PRIME MINISTER

Personal Minute
No MG/78

MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF DEPARTMENTS

Disclosure of Cabinet Committees

Consistently with the practice of all former Prime Ministers I have always refused to publish details of Cabinet Committees or to answer Questions in the House about them. Hitherto this has led to some allegations in the Press about Whitehall obscurantism but little interest or pressure in Parliament itself. There is however now some evidence that Select Committees would like to interest themselves in the Committee system and may be seeking to erode the present convention. I have therefore been considering the case for taking the initiative and disclosing details of the Committee structure.

I accept that the present convention has certain disadvantages for us. In particular non-disclosure makes it difficult to answer charges that the Government's policies are not properly co-ordinated. For example the Select Committee on Overseas Development has recommended the establishment of a Cabinet Committee to co-ordinate

'Consistently with the practice of all former Prime Ministers I have always refused to publish details of Cabinet Committees or to answer Questions in the House about them. Hitherto this has led to some allegations in the Press about Whitehall obscurantism but little interest or pressure in Parliament itself. There is, however, now some evidence that Select Committees would like to interest themselves in the Committee system and may be seeking to erode the present convention. I have therefore been considering the case for taking the initiative and disclosing details of the Committee structure.

I accept that the present convention has certain disadvantages for us. In particular non-disclosure makes it difficult to answer charges that the Government's policies are not properly co-ordinated. For example the Select Committee on Overseas Development has recommended the establishment of a Cabinet Committee to co-ordinate political, trade and aid policies towards the developing world largely because the ODM were not able to disclose that such a committee (RD) already exists. It is also arguable that non-disclosure is inconsistent with a policy of greater openness. In any case some parts of the Committee structure are quite widely known outside Government: in these cases what is at issue therefore is a refusal to admit publicly what a lot of people know about privately.

It is important therefore to understand the reasons for the current practice of non-disclosure. They are as follows: the Cabinet Committee system grew up as the load on the Cabinet itself became too great. It allows matters of lesser importance to be decided without troubling the whole Cabinet: and major issues to be clarified in order to save the time of the Cabinet. The method adopted by Ministers for discussing policy questions is however essentially a domestic matter: and a decision by a Cabinet Committee, unless referred to the Cabinet, engages the collective responsibility of all Ministers and has exactly the same authority as a decision by the Cabinet itself. Disclosure that a particular Committee had dealt with a matter might lead to argument about the status of the decision or demands that it should be endorsed by the whole Cabinet. Furthermore publishing details of the Committees would be both misleading and counter-productive. The existence of some could not be disclosed on security grounds: others are set up to do a particular job and are then wound up. The absence of a Committee on a particular subject (eg agriculture or poverty) does not mean that the Government do not attach importance to it: and the fact that a particular Minister is not on a committee does not mean that he does not attend when his interests are affected. Publication would almost inevitably lead to pressures for both more and larger Committees, and for disclosures of information about their activities.

I do not believe that we could in any event disclose the existence of the GEN groups. This is partly because of their ephemeral nature and partly because disclosure would often reveal either that very sensitive subjects were under consideration or that we had something in train about which we were not ready to make an announcement. Disclosure of the main standing Committees would thus give a partial picture only. Moreover having gone as far as this I do not believe that it would be possible for me to hold the line and refuse to answer any further questions about the composition and activities of the Committees. At the minimum we would be under pressure to reveal the names of the Chairmen. This would make it harder for me to make changes: and it would have implications for the responsibilities of Departmental Ministers since Select Committees would try to summon the Chairmen of Cabinet Committees to give evidence in addition to the responsible Minister. I should also be under continuing pressure to say that

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a committee was considering a particular subject (and often it would be a GEN group): and there would be questions about when Committees were meeting, the work they were doing, whether particular Ministers are on them, the details of under-pinning Official Committees, etc.

I have therefore decided that we should not change our stance on this matter. The present convention is long established and provides a basis on which we can stand. Any departure from it would be more likely to whet appetites than to satisfy them. I ask my colleagues therefore to rest on the position that the way in which we co-ordinate our decisions is a matter internal to Government and not to answer questions about the Cabinet Committee system.'

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LJC

New move to shift Labour off 'law and order' bandwagon

Next Monday a new campaign will be launched within the Labour Party. 'Labour for Criminal Justice' aims to persuade the Party to formulate – and carry out – cohesive socialist policies on criminal procedure and penal reform. It could help to fill a conspicuous gap. So bereft is Labour of ideas or commitment in this area that it is currently reduced to aping the Tories. ANNA COOTE reports.

Let give Merlyn a rough ride in law and order row
LAW AND ORDER: A JUDGE SPEAKS OUT
LABOUR AT BLACKPOOL
Crime and punishment
Attack as he backs the police
REES
BACK TO DISCIPLINE
DUN'T KNOCK
HOME NEWS

The House of Commons spent four hours on Monday debating those sections of the Queen's Speech which dealt with Home Policy. The main theme was criminal justice – the causes of crime, the means to prevent it, the treatment of suspects and offenders, the compensation of victims. At least, that is one way of putting it. More precisely, Merlyn Rees spent the afternoon in the dock, defending himself vigorously – and fairly effectively – against Tory suspicion that he might be soft on crime.

'The preservation of law and order must be the major preoccupation of any Home Secretary in government' he said. 'Crime has risen relentlessly over the last ten years . . . I am determined to deal firmly with it . . .' He catalogued Labour's efforts to date: the Criminal Law Act introduced tougher penalties; magistrates had new powers to enforce fines on juveniles; over £2,000 million would be spent on law and order this year – an increase in real terms of £300 million since 1974; the government was firmly committed to strengthening the police and recruitment in the Metropolitan area had risen by 27 per cent; £23 million had been spent on building new prisons and £8 million on repairs and extensions to old ones; 4,500 'additional inmate places' would be completed in the next four years . . .

The Opposition spokesman David Howell replied that his party wanted no action on penal reform until people were reassured that the crime problem was being properly tackled; it wanted 'firm and unstinted support for the police', right up to top government levels; it wanted young offenders to be sent into detention earlier in their criminal careers, and 'shorter, more rigorous' sentences. Otherwise, there was little disagreement between the two front benches. 'We are glad to see that the Home Secretary recognises the importance of the law and order issue' said Howell, with forgivable smugness.

In this area of policy, the Tories have got Labour on the run. The very phrase 'law and order' indicates that the perimeters of debate have been marked out with a Tory yardstick. Attention is focused on police power and punishment, and in particular how to get *more* of these, rather than how to ensure they are sensibly contained and fairly administered by publicly accountable bodies.

The Tories are well-acquainted with the vote-catching properties of the law-and-order ticket. It's a dead simple concept and an all-time favourite with the Tory press, which likes to suggest that mugging is a result of creeping Marxism. With an election imminent and not many fresh ideas of its own, the Labour Party seems to have had no alternative than to plant its own soap box right next to its opponent and mouth the same words to the crowd.

At last month's Labour conference, a motion calling for 'bold and resolute action . . . to combat the menace of vandalism, wanton destruction and needless violence' was condemned by some delegates as more fitting for debate at the Conservative conference and containing sentiments 'more appropriate to the National Front'. But it was passed, *faute de mieux*, with a substantial majority of 4,411,000 to 2,069,000.

Labour's trouble is that it has never had any coherent policy on criminal justice. The 'law and order' debate at Blackpool left the party hanging awkwardly between two apparently conflicting ideologies. Andy Williams from Liverpool, West Derby, led the Torier-than-thou ranters: 'Old age pensioners are afraid to leave their homes after dusk', while Bob Marshall Andrews from Richmond, Surrey summed up for the radical sociologists: 'I'll tell you what the cause of crime is in this country in eight words: it is the *lack of values endemic in a capitalist society!*'

In the absence of a programme to overthrow capitalism, the Labour radicals seem at a loss for ways to deal with the issue of criminal justice. And in the propaganda war, the Party has had its work cut out persuading the public that it is not actively encouraging young thugs to beat old ladies over the head. '*We too* defend law and order', Robert Kilroy-Silk protested during Monday's debate in the Commons. '*We too* want to see criminals caught and punished. This should not be an issue between the parties.' Ah, but it *is*. And as long as Labour MPs like Kilroy-Silk find it necessary to preface otherwise sensible speeches with disclaimers of that kind, the Tories will know they are on to a winner.

It might help if Labour had some record of real achievement in the field, a few laurels of its own to rest upon. But a government whose Attorney General lays down secret guidelines for jury vetting and prosecutes journalists under laws it admits to be obsolete, will not win many votes for fair administration of justice. Nor will a government whose Home Secretary responds to a crisis caused by gross overcrowding in prisons merely by ordering an inquiry into the pay and conditions of prison staff. 'What has the Home Secretary been doing?' raged Kilroy-Silk on Monday. 'He shouldn't need an outside body to tell him what's wrong with his own department. He has come to his dispatch box today unable to announce one single new initiative!' Apart from introducing Community Service Orders

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Oilgate notebook

Callaghan Speaks

■ I'm sorry Mr Callaghan was reluctant to speak in the Rhodesia debate. I've therefore dug up some remarks he made in 1972. It was the Americans and the French, he said, who were making sanctions fail: '. . . other countries are not taking the same view as ours; nor do they apply the same standards'. Ronald Bell, MP, interrupted: 'They have more sense'. Callaghan replied that his fellow MP should have 'more regard for the law', and added that the Tory Government should 'get assistance from other countries to establish a patrol at Lourenco Marques' to cut off Rhodesia's oil. Only two conclusions seem possible. *Either* Callaghan knew that the British oil companies were supplying Rhodesia through Lourenço Marques (Maputo). *Or* the Labour Cabinet was not consulted in 1968, when the crucial decision was taken to facilitate that supply.

Talking personally. . .

■ We sometimes forget, of course, how remarkable it is that – apparently – there was no Ministerial knowledge of sanctions-busting until 1968. Any serious inquiry would have to try to find out why our diplomats and intelligence sources let the Cabinet down so badly – for the sanctions-busting, of course, began in 1966. (To be fair to the intelligence men, there is at least one veteran of those days who says that the politicians and the superior mandarins showed no interest whatever in proposals for really professional investigations of sanctions-busting.) The evidence we have so far suggests that the relationship between Whitehall and the oil companies is remarkably cosy. On one occasion an important civil servant in the Ministry of Power, Mr Alan Gregory, agreed to an oil-company request that certain vital information should be given to a desk officer 'on a personal basis'. It is not quite clear what 'personal basis' means, but one interpretation suggested is that information provided in this way need not be passed up to the Minister (it would have been Richard Marsh in those days).

Alan Gregory has since become a director of BP.

The faithful servant

■ Lord Greenhill retires from the BP board this week. I doubt the state owes him a gold watch. As head of the Foreign Office till 1973, Greenhill knew about the swap deals that were being made to supply Rhodesia: he apparently wasn't troubled that BP and the Foreign Office should pass to the UN their misleading 'assurances' of innocence. Tom Jackson, BP's other Government director, did make some attempts to bring out the truth. He also waived his director's fees, which Lord Greenhill didn't.

Martin Bailey

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and passing a law which obliges magistrates to think more positively about bail, Labour has very little to show for itself after four years in office.

It was this lack of activity by the official machinery of the Party which prompted the Labour Campaign for Criminal Justice. Clive Soley, a senior probation officer and prospective parliamentary candidate for Hammersmith North, helped launch the campaign after four frustrating years on Labour's Human Rights Sub-Committee. He had tried to interest the government in penal reform and had drafted the 'penal policy' sections of successive Labour Party programmes. 'People should be deprived of their liberty only where it is necessary to protect the public,' says the 1973 Labour programme. 'Our prisons have become so crowded that rehabilitation has become almost impossible . . . All the money that the Tories have earmarked for additional places in prison could be used to finance methods of non-custodial care.' 'There could be major advantages in adopting a conditional release scheme such as that recently introduced in Northern Ireland . . . In this way a prisoner qualifies for release half way through his sentence,' says the 1976 programme. 'There are strains in the relationship between the police and the public, especially with some minorities. We believe this tension would be eased by taking the role of prosecutor away from the police . . . as in Scotland.' One is used to discrepancies between manifestos and government action, but these statements of intent and Rees's speech to the Commons on Monday could have come from two quite different political parties.

Soley and others on the Human Rights Sub-Committee have become increasingly aware that they are making no impact on government policy – although that is what they are there for, in theory. When they suggested in December 1975 that parole should be scrapped and replaced with automatic but forfeitable remission, 'in view of the tension, frustrated hopes, bitterness and indiscipline' the system had caused, the first (informal) response from Shirley Summerskill, Under Secretary of State at the Home Office, was: 'Who dreamt up *this* daft scheme?' When the Labour government set up the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure, no plans were made at Transport House to present evidence on behalf of the Labour Party. A young lawyer who rang up to inquire was informed that the Party 'might comment on the Commission's findings'. Only after strenuous lobbying did the NEC agree to prepare evidence of its own.

The new campaign will aim to build up support at all levels of the Labour Party. Harriet Harman, a founder member who will act as campaign secretary, explains: 'You can't really blame the Parliamentary Labour Party for being weak on criminal justice when there isn't a consensus within the Party. There won't be any action until there is a strong internal lobby.' It will take some time. The right policies aren't just floating around waiting to be snapped up: they will need to be hammered out. 'The first thing is to shift the focus of debate from the need to maintain "order" to the need for fair administration of justice. The police can't operate effectively without co-operation of the public. There's no point increasing their powers when the result is that people are alienated by threats to civil liberty.'

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The Labour Party wants an inquiry into the Security services.
E.P. Thompson on the manipulators of Whitehall

The secret state within the state

MR CHAPMAN PINCHER has been employed by the *Daily Express* for over 30 years as a sort of common conduit through which 'government ministers, defence chiefs, directors of Security and Intelligence, senior civil servants and others' have leaked their official secrets, scandals and innuendos to the readers and to each other. He has now published an account of this commerce, called *Inside Story**. I have examined this work, less with an eye to the subject-matter (mainly Westminster and Whitehall trivia) than to Mr Pincher's style of operation.

He is coy about identifying his informants, unless these were Labour Ministers. Among those who seemingly passed him information in breach of the Official Secrets Act are: 'an official from Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), the highly secret network of eavesdropping and decoding stations based at Cheltenham' (p.18); a girl in the MI5 registry at Curzon Street (p.26); 'a prime MI6 source' (p.39); 'a former MI5 officer' (p.114); Sir Frederick Brundrett, once Chief Scientist at the Air Ministry (pp.150, 176, 297); a Deputy-Director of MI6 (p.165); assorted 'service chiefs' (eg p.228); an attender at the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee (p.313); 'a very senior member of MI6' (p.376) and so on.

Also, we are given the names of persons who are variously described as 'contacts' or 'close friends', who briefed him privately on secret matters in their official capacities, or who perhaps planted 'disinformation' through him. One notes: Lords George-Brown, Wigg and Watkinson; Admiral Sir Ray Lygo, onetime Vice-chief of the Naval Staff (p.57); the head of the legal department of MI5 (p.76); Sir Richard Way, onetime Permanent Secretary at the War Office (p.125); Air-Chief Marshal Sir David Evans of Strike Command (p.295); Sir Ronald Ellis, head of Defence Sales (p.317); Air-Chief Marshal Sir Peter Fletcher, former RAF 'chief planner' (p.318); Sir Ray Brown, government arms salesman (p.234). The work has been arduous, involving Mr Pincher in much slumming about Westminster and Whitehall: endless meals in the Ecu de France, Rules, Kettners, the Savoy, the Dorchester; tedious parties in Embassies and at country houses; the slaughter of much game and the filling-up of the boot of his car with bloody hares. He has had to sip tea from silver tumblers with the Shah ('he expressed dismay at the kid-glove way the British Army was dealing with terrorists in Northern Ireland'), followed by the 'briefing' by Mr Pincher of the British Ambassador ' "I shall have to warn London right away", he said as we took tea in the splendid Embassy garden, while parakeets flitted in and out from the Russian embassy across the road, equipped, so Ramsbotham joked, with eavesdropping bugs' (p.264). Pincher's life has been much like that of a parakeet, and we must look to see his name in the Honours List.

Edward Thompson began the Centre for the Study of Social History at Warwick University. He led the democratic opposition within the Communist Party till 1956, and was among the founders of *New Left Review*. His latest book is *The Poverty of Theory* (Merlin £3.90) and he is also the author of *The Making of the English Working Class; Whigs and Hunters* (1975) and *Out of Apathy*. He has long been a committed socialist and libertarian, and his work stresses the connection between socialism and democracy in historical as well as political terms.

It is not directly suggested that any in this last paragraph broke the Official Secrets Act, although it is directly suggested that Lord George-Brown broke his Privy Councillor's oath (pp.94-5). The operational style is displayed most clearly in Chapter 33, which describes how (in 1975?) 'a naval contact in the Ministry of Defence' told Mr Pincher that an unarmed naval auxiliary vessel carrying Polaris nuclear warheads between Portsmouth and Falane had apparently gone missing in the Irish Sea. There is a regular ferry service, because the fuses and trigger mechanisms have to be checked against corrosion every few weeks at the Royal Ordnance Factory at Burghfield near Reading.

This, which could hardly be more 'secret', Pincher leaked in fictionalised form, serialising *The Eye of the Tornado* in the *Sunday Express* (1976):

> . . . I acknowledged my indebtedness to 'senior officials present and past, in the Defence Ministry, Royal Navy, the Secret Intelligence Service, and others'.
>
> Inevitably, the Prime Minister, James Callaghan, was asked in Parliament what assistance of this nature I had in fact been given. Also inevitably he replied, 'none that I know of'.
>
> He could not have inquired very deeply. Not only was I given technical assistance as stated but the text was read and corrected by very senior government officials. The only concession I was asked to make was to omit reference to Burghfield. . . . It was to avoid anti-nuclear demonstrations outside the factory (pp.308-9).

WHAT IS ONE to make of all this? There are three possible views. First, that Chapman Pincher is merely romancing: no-one has broken the Official Secrets Act with him, Lord George-Brown did not break his Privy Council oath, and the 'private briefings' are empty brags. But there is far too much circumstantial detail in the book; far too many of Mr Pincher's leaks were subsequently confirmed, and anyway this book would not have gone to press without scrutiny by an expensive libel lawyer.

Second, we may suppose that Mr Pincher has been less an operator than the tool of other operators. In this view, all the leaking has been contrived and wholly proper. It has been an exercise by our superiors in the management of news: in which proper persons decide not only when an Official Secret becomes an Unsecret, but how it becomes an Unsecret for some, while it remains defended by criminal sanctions if published by others. This might be justified as an exercise in confusing and 'disinforming' the KGB, although in fact – as in the case of Burghfield – the real objective is to confuse, disinform and manage opinion in Britain.

In this view, the columns of the *Express* may be seen as a kind of official urinal in which, side by side, high officials of MI5 and 6, Sea Lords, Permanent Under-Secretaries, Lord George-Brown, Chiefs of the Air Staff, nuclear scientists, Lord Wigg and others stand patiently leaking in the public interest.

But although this view explains many episodes (especially during the premiership of Macmillan and Heath, who would appear to have had some sense of propriety, and to have kept the Security Services in a state of low visibility) it is not a sufficient one. For what Pincher's text suggests, again and again, is private enterprise in leaking Official Secrets, sometimes by persons in pursuit of private or political vendettas, sometimes in the course of lobbying by service chiefs (for this missile, or against that aircraft carrier), but most particularly in pursuit of extreme right-wing objectives: the aim being to defame the parliamentary Labour Party, particular Cabinet ministers, and the Left generally throughout the country.

This leads us, then, to a third view: most of Pincher's book is true. The Acts were repeatedly broken in these ways, many leaks coming through private or 'quasi-official enterprise. Of course, many episodes fall within the second explanation: Mr Pincher is too self-important and light-witted a fellow to realise how often he has been used. He sees himself always in virile posture ('the years when my penetration of the defence departments was particularly deep', p.100). But for most of the time he was simply being paid for receiving the normal secretions of the State. Nevertheless, we can suppose that this book gives us a true, if misty, record of this commerce.

What then follows? It is instructive that this platterful of 'secret' excreta, some of it still warm from the bowels of the State, should have been served up to the public at exactly the same time as the State, with the apparent active insistence of the Security Services, the armed services and the

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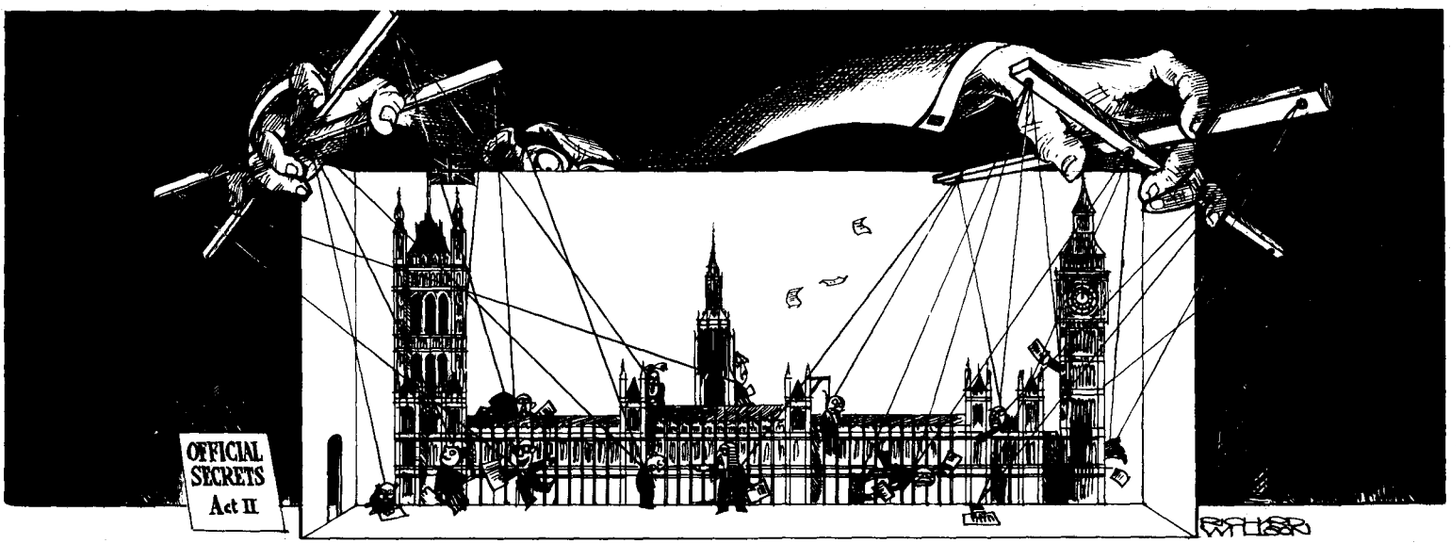


Foreign Office – the friends, one might say, of Chapman Pincher – should have brought to trial – upon charges which have in large part had to be dropped, because the judge regarded them as 'very oppressive' – two journalists and a long-retired lance-corporal, for having discussed in private things which can scarcely be of equivalent moment to those openly discussed in Mr Pincher's pages.

We may suppose that Mr Pincher and his publishers timed *Inside Story* to coincide with a General Election. In view of certain of his 'disclosures', this was like launching a leaking oil-tanker upon troubled waters, in the hope of further polluting the polluted electoral beaches.

Whoever master-minded this operation is, anyway, so arrogant as to suppose that no-one would notice the flagrant double-standards displayed. Or perhaps he, or they (for may we not assume that the text of this book also was 'read and corrected by very senior government officials'?) hoped that we *would* notice and take the point? Against a background of prosecution success in the ABC trial (something not now possible in the terms originally intended) Pincher's book might drive home the point that double standards are *the very essence* of the Act. Pincher reminds us (p.209) of the Normanbrook ruling, still in force, under which 'any information arising in a government department is officially secret until it is officially released.' It may therefore follow that any information released (or leaked) by an influential official cannot be construed as being secret, since an official has released it. Official leakage is in the 'public interest'. Anything we find out for ourselves is against the public interest, and will bring us within the Act. This is, of course, the old class war continued by other means.

THE POINT OF INTEREST is whether this war is more one-sided and malevolent lately. On the evidence of this book it certainly is. In the last few years senior officials of the Security Services have taken to leaking like a wardful of incontinents, daily sheets from Fleet Street wrapped between their legs as nappies. Twenty years ago, MI5 & 6 were deployed with some circumspection.

In 1961, according to Mr Pincher, Lord George-Brown approached him on behalf of a 'secret committee' comprising Brown, Gaitskell and Patrick Gordon Walker, with the request to be put in touch with the heads of MI5 and MI6, and with the intention of gathering from these sources material on the activities of 'crypto-Communists' within the parliamentary Labour Party, as evidence for expelling these MPs from the party. This genial move was blocked, not by the head of MI5 (who was glad to gossip with Brown) but by Harold Macmillan (pp.21-6).

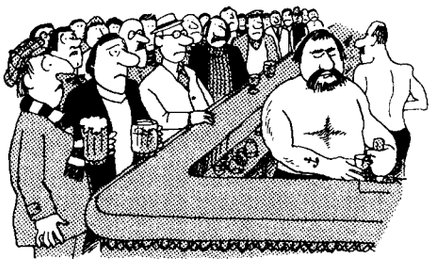
In this case, the initiative came from morally-defective politicians who – some readers may yet remember – were under extreme pressure when the demand for unilateral nuclear disarmament was carried by Labour's Conference. By Pincher's account, the initiative in the seventies has passed wholly to the Security Services, with the interoperation of the British and US services being total. As one 'prime MI6 source' told Mr Pincher, 'anything and everything would be possible if it was considered necessary to protect the Anglo-American joint Intelligence arrangements' (pp.38-9). One 'anything', presumably, was the deportation of Agee and Hosenball in 1977: another, the decision to put Aubrey, Berry and Campbell on trial. Mr Pincher makes a mysterious pudding out of whether Sir Harold Wilson was bugged or not, but he leaves us to infer that this was done by the CIA or NSA, and the MI5 and MI6 then covered up for these (p.38). He directly alleges, though, that there was some native surveillance of Wilson (in 1974) and he refers to a document 'in the registry of MI6' and gives a precis of its contents (pp.30-1).

With respect to more notorious subversives, the tale is plainer yet. In 1976 Mr Pincher took part in an operation (during which he had dealings with the head of MI6) which resulted in the naming, under parliamentary privilege, of Jack Jones, Ernie Roberts, Hugh Scanlon and Lord Briginshaw as 'prime targets for Soviet bloc intelligence' (pp.138-9)*. He also alleges that 'certain ministers' in the Cabinet are denied access to intelligence information on security grounds (p.19). He further tells us – and was permitted to inform the nation on television – that (in 1975?) certain officials in MI5, serving and retired, tried to bring down the government, making preparations to publicise the activities of Labour MPs (from evidence derived from 'undercover surveillance') including two serving and one retired Cabinet minister (p.17).

*Ed. Note: This resulted from the defection of a Czech named Josef Frolik, who also, ludicrously, claimed knowledge of a plot to lay various sexual traps for Edward Heath,

THIS ENGLAND

A collection of the most amusing This Englands of the last four years.



☐ Drinkers got a shock when they flocked to a Norfolk pub advertising topless bar staff – the staff were all men. – *Sunday Mirror*

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There are also two steaming turds *from the last two years' excretions* which deserve fuller quotations:

> As regards those crypto-Communists still sitting in Westminster, I can quote from a 1978 Intelligence report in my possession which states that 'at least 59 serving Labour MPs . . . have current or recent connections with Communist, Trotskyist or other Marxist organisations . . .' A list attached to this report . . . includes five ministers and four junior ministers (p.28).

And this one. George Young, a former deputy-director of MI6, wrote in 1977 to David Yorck, formerly of the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS, forerunner of the CIA):

> At one point under Wilson there were five ministers of the Crown whose membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain is not known to have been renounced and overlapping with them other ministers whose ultimate allegiance is outside Britain. (p.28)*

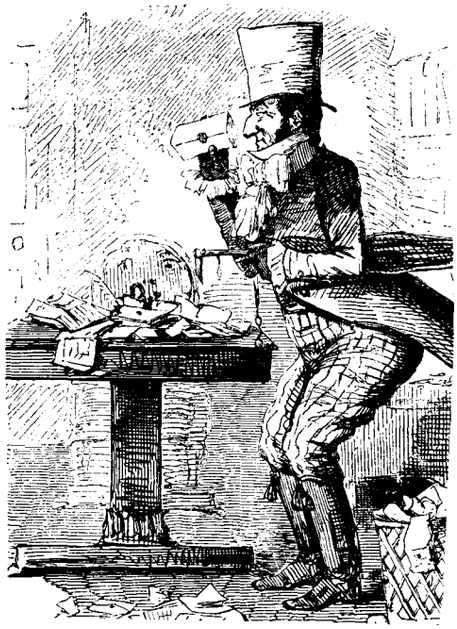
A Government or a House of Commons ceases to have any credibility if it tolerates in silence this kind of repeated 'disclosure', made with the alleged complicity of its own Security Services. The Home Policy Committee of the Labour Party has called for a full inquiry into the workings of the Security Services. Without such an inquiry, it will appear that Government has ceased to govern, and that Members of Parliament have ceased to have any regard for their political honour.

If Mr Pincher has evidence in his possession as to the covert surveillance of a Prime Minister, or a 1978 Intelligence report naming 59 Labour MPs and nine ministers of the Crown, then he should be called to produce his evidence – under suitable protection, perhaps, from an Official Secrets prosecution – and if he cannot do so, he should be exposed. For offences far more trivial than this, calumniators have been hauled before the Bar of the House and made to substantiate their allegations.

IF THERE IS ANY HONOUR left in that House, this crescendo of allegations must lead to an inquiry on the scale of Congressional and Senate inquiries into the CIA. If the allegations are sustained in any part, then there must be dismissals, and total reorganisation of the security services under new forms of public accountability.

But the unpleasant truth is that this inquiry cannot and will not be made. It is beginning to appear that the reason why the Prime Minister, the Government, the parliamentary Labour Party, and the House of Commons, will do nothing about the situation is that they lie under a state of blackmail to the Security Services.

I know of *no* historical precedent for this. I am not claiming inside sources of information, but from the material available I must infer that MI5 & 6 have accumulated in their dossiers enough unpleasant-seeming material on enough MPs, including senior politicians, to make it impossible for MPs, collectively, to break and run. If the blackmail was called, it might not amount – except in a few cases – to much more than scandal. But the scandals would be numerous. For several years, the political air would be fouled up, and there would be some terminal casualties in political life.



Punch, 1844: Tenniel draws Home Secretary Graham as 'Paul Pry'. Today, says Chapman Pincher, mail-opening can be a routine, low-level decision.

If a person is in public life for some years, and subject to 'undercover surveillance', it may be hard not to commit some indiscretion (sexual? receipt of a gift?) or some act which can be made to look worse (East-West trade? helping a government contract along?). MPs, casting their minds back over the past, don't know exactly what 'they' may have got on them, or on their colleagues, and as the profile of the Security Services rises more and more ominously above its undercover waters, they fall victim to a collective unease.

The blackmail falls, of course, much more heavily on a Labour administration than a Tory, since the Security Services appear to operate on a Mid-West college kid's definition of 'Marxist organisations' (the Institute for Workers' Control? The Royal Arsenal Co-Op?), and for whom solidarity with Chilean refugees constitutes 'allegiance . . . outside Britain'.

This explains why the present and recent Labour administrations have dealt more weakly with the Security Services than previous administrations, why the profile of these services rises higher every month, why Mr Pincher's book can appear in the midst of the ABC trial, why Labour Home Secretaries and Attorney-Generals dance to their advisers' nods, and why there is worse to come.

It is not clear whether such pressures were involved in Sir Harold Wilson's sudden resignation: Mr Pincher's chapter on this appears to fall into the category of 'disinformation', and it concludes with a distinct warning-off. 'A very senior member of MI6' warned him that 'I would be wasting my time trying to find out why Wilson resigned because there was a mystery there'. (p.376). A 'most eminent Oxford Professor' has written to Mr Pincher to tell him that Sir Harold Wilson said, last year, that MI5 'plotted against him, tried to secure his downfall'. (Which eminent Oxford Professors act as Pincher's informants?)

One might imagine, in a Thatcherite administration, the Tories attempting to benefit from their close ideological accord with the Security chiefs, by selective unloosing of dossiers in a McCarthyite climax. I think this unlikely. First, it might cause even the most abject of Labour politicians to stand and fight. Even Mr Rees and Mr Silkin would arch their backs and mew. Second, it would destroy the threadbare but still serviceable myth of Security 'neutrality'.

And there is a third reason. I do not see why we are always *bound* to take a charitable view of MI5, 6, etc. Mr Pincher's memoirs suggest that every corporal in the Security Services fantasises that he has in his knapsack the baton of General Pinochet.

The present situation is wholly satisfactory to the senior Security chiefs. The black widow has bitten its parliamentary victim: eyes are glazed, limbs paralysed. MPs and ministers are keeping their heads down, and are abjectly compliant to each piece of 'advice'. But there may be younger, rising men within Security for whom all this is not enough. They will wish to move in and eat their prey. This eating will be presented in full colour to the British public, perhaps as the formation of a National Government in the public's own interest.

Mr Pincher's book has one cheery piece of disinformation:

> As recently as the summer of 1978, I have been assured by a most senior British Intelligence official that the secret services, which are active in checking on all subversive movements, have no evidence whatever of any right-wing group aimed at disturbing the elected government in any way. (p.136)

Now, while this is inaccurate – there are certainly right-wing groups which *aim*, however ineptly, at disturbing the government – I think it may have historical truth. It is like a bank robber who has achieved a high position in Securicor assuring the bank manager that there are no robbers planning to break in and blast his safes open. The bank will be entered in full uniform, and the safes opened from within by those officially apprised of the combinations.

I don't discount the significance of neo-Fascist bodies, nor underestimate their contribution to polluting the atmosphere. But my sense of history suggests that any rightist take-over in Britain will come, not through the agency of the Mosleys or Websters, but by steady, vegetable pressures from within the State itself: the management of news, the blackmailing of politicians, the political 'vetting' of civil servants, the clipping of the coinage of civil liberties, the enlargement of police powers, the dissemination of calumny against dissenters, the corruption of the jury system, the surveillance and intimidation of radicals, the management of state trials, the orchestration through the media of a 'law and order' *grande peur* – and the cry of 'national interest'. The strategic centre for this pressure will lie with the Security Services, armed services, and police. But it will be ably supported by a vociferous lobby of Tory MPs, captive editors, 'neutral' television commentators, under-secretaries at Whitehall, some judges, and the odd 'eminent Oxford professor'. My sense of politics

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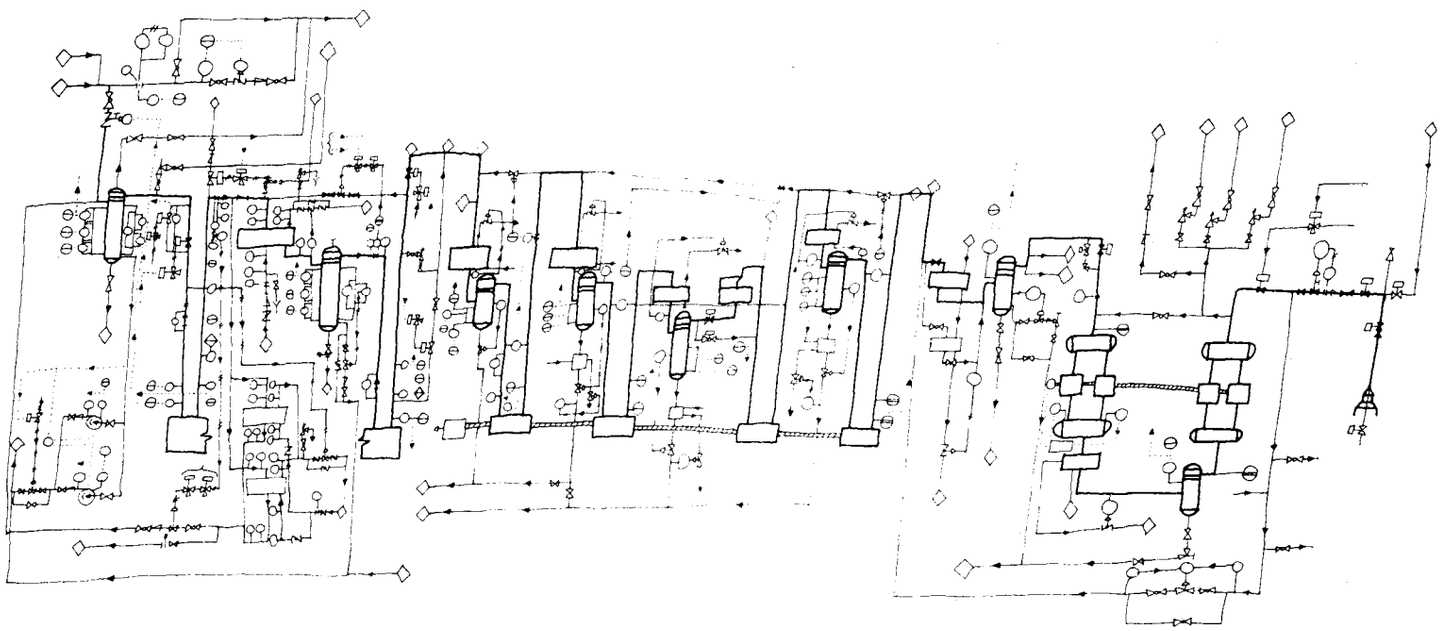
Our £18 million doodle.



We had a first-class dilemma on our hands.

Our Beryl field, 95 miles off Shetland, contains 1,100 cubic feet of gas dissolved in each barrel of oil brought up from the reservoir rocks. That's three times more than you'd find in many North Sea fields. We knew we could use some of the gas as fuel to run the production platform. But what to do with the rest? Even the large quantity of Beryl gas wasn't enough to justify a special pipeline to shore. And neither Mobil nor the government wanted to burn any more gas than necessary through flaring it at the platform.

So we started to doodle.

Our solution — a flow-chart like the one doodled above — cost us more than £18 million by the time we had transformed it into pumps, compressors and pipes. We simply send the gas back where it came from — injecting it into the reservoir beneath the seabed. In this process the injected gas helps maintain pressure in the reservoir, forcing more oil to the surface. Meanwhile, the gas itself is saved for later production. The technique is frequently used elsewhere in the world, but no one had yet attempted it in the difficult waters of the North Sea.

Our engineering approach — really a refinery in miniature — was to take the gas as it emerges from the well at a pressure of 160 pounds per square inch, and compress it to 6,000 pounds per square inch — enough to drive it down special wells and force it into the porous rock below. It required a series of compressors weighing a total of 2,000 tons. With associated equipment, they take up a quarter of the deck space on our Beryl A producing platform — room enough for 100 double-decker buses.

Mobil thus has become the first company to achieve successful gas injection in the U.K. North Sea. There are still teething troubles to be sorted out in this complex and demanding operation and it will take some time before it's working smoothly. Nevertheless, we have already injected over 12 thousand million cubic feet of gas into the Beryl reservoir.

And when the job of enhancing Beryl's oil recovery is complete, the gas will still be there, stored beneath the sea bed — an energy deposit account which will one day be drawn upon to meet Britain's needs for fuel, and raw material for the chemical industry.

Fourth in a series on the challenges of North Sea Oil.

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suggests that this take-over is already under way. As John Berry said in the dock on 27 October: 'There is a state within the state, a secret state about which questions should not be asked.' Against such a take-over this country is provided with few constitutional defences.

The secret state moves forward and occupies the public state from within, leaving most of the latter's rhetoric, and most of its electoral legitimacy intact. What better 'cover' for 'M' than a Labour Prime Minister?

I MIGHT LEAVE IT there, but I have some personal accounting to do. Pincher provides, with an equable hand, some low-level information, as well as disinformation, about the Security Services themselves.

The silliest piece of disinformation, passed on with a sceptical shrug, is that 'the highest official figure for the number of telephones tapped in one year is 242' (p.145). Some of us could tot up that number fairly easily by running through our own associates and friends, starting with the offices of the National Council for Civil Liberties, *Peace News*, the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, and so on.

> Most of the telephones tapped in Britain belong to suspected spies, criminals, subversives, customs evaders, National Front leaders and journalists. (p.147)

Since we are also informed – the truth? more disinformation to frighten us? – that there are two million dossiers in the registries of MI5 and MI6 (p.143), an unexpectedly large percentage of the British population falls within these categories.

I do not suppose my own dossier bulks large among these. Our phone was certainly tapped in the early 1950s, when my wife and I were in active opposition to the Korean War. Just possibly we might have been under lukewarm surveillance at the time of CND and the early New Left.

But our efforts to overthrow the state did not meet with success, and I suspect that the spooks lost interest. Perhaps the file was got out and dusted at the time of the 'troubles' at Warwick University. Since that time I imagine that it has been collecting dust once more in one of the 'Wendy Houses' of the MI registries (which Pincher lovingly describes), perhaps marked: 'File inactive. Query – Gone to earth? Query – Dead?' The last time I was aware of being under rather heavy surveillance was in India, during the last months of Mrs Gandhi's Emergency – as a consequence of my recklessness in assuring shocked academic audiences that Mr Michael Foot's endorsement of that unpleasant police state did not carry the approval of the entire British Labour movement.

My dossier may have been got out again, rather sharply, when I began to take an interest in the ABC Defence Committee. At least, I have good reason to suppose that my mail is now being 'surveilled'. The background makes too long a story, but in short I have an interest in opening the archives of the Special Operations Executive from the last war – records which I consider to be at present improperly held beyond even the reach of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records.

Major Frank Thompson, E.P.'s brother, killed on secret service in Bulgaria, 1944. His mission, and his death, remain an Official Secret.

My interest is personal. For the records should include full evidence as to the British Mission sent in support of the Bulgarian partisans (1943-4), which my brother Major Frank Thompson, at one time commanded, and in the course of which he was captured on Bulgarian soil, brutally interrogated, and shot. To my knowledge, no official statement has ever been made as to the existence of this Mission, nor as to my brother's death, so that the matter remains an Official Secret – to the British public at least, since in Bulgaria the work of the Mission is acknowledged, a railway station has been named after my brother, and he is a National Hero of that country.

I have recently taken up again my long and fruitless attempts to look into these archives, and have exchanged some letters with others who have a public interest in the matter. A few days ago an important letter, from an extremely distinguished officer of the last war, disappeared from a packet in the post. The letter (no more than a courteous response to one of my own) was of no possible 'subversive' character, though the writer mentioned his own difficulties with the custodians of SOE papers. The sender is certain that it was in the packet when sent, and I am certain it did not arrive.

Compared with any page of Pincher's memoirs, this is very small beer. I was amused, however, to note one of the last 'official' statements on the interception of communications, in the Report of the Birkett Committee (October 1957), in which Parliament was told that such powers are used only against 'wrong-doers' and are

> used with the greatest care and circumspection . . . and never without the personal considered approval of the Secretary of State.

Must I ask why recently Mr Merlyn Rees may have given his 'personal considered opinion' that an inoffensive social historian and member of the general management committee of the Kidderminster CLP should rank as a 'wrong-doer' meriting this attention? Mr Pincher, who knows much more about it than did the committee of Privy Councillors, is able to deflect this question from Mr Rees. For he tells us that he has established, 'by questioning security officials', that the Home Secretary is very rarely troubled with these matters. The duty is delegated to underlings: moreover, any of 15 Secretaries of State (and their underlings also?) can approve warrants for tapping of telephones (p.145). I suspect that by now the notion of ministerial delegation is only a fiction. So I may continue to regard Mr Rees as a jolly good liberal fellow.

SUCH SURVEILLANCE is age-old: one should keep one's cool and reflect what a service is being done for historians in the 75-year future. But for spies, narks and letter-copiers, the history of the English working-class would be unknown, and the archives of the Library of National Security in 2078 will be infinitely grander than anything now in the Public Record Office.

In the naïve 19th century, though, citizens had not yet achieved a mature view of these matters. When it transpired that, on the authority of Sir James Graham (the Home Secretary) letters passing between Mazzini, and William Lovett and W. J. Linton, had been opened and betrayed to the Austrians, with the result (as it then appeared) that nine Bandieras were lethally ambushed in Calabria – there was a quite ridiculous fuss.

Graham was the catspaw of the Foreign Secretary, a condition not unknown to contemporary Home Secretaries and Attorney-Generals: this was not accepted by the public as an adequate explanation. Indignation meetings were held, and people franked their letters: 'Not to be Grahamed'. Should our friends who are in correspondence with dissidents in the Soviet Union, East Europe, Iran, Latin America or South Africa mark their letters: 'Not to be Reesed'?

It is enough for me to invite the head of the Post Office to inquire into the route taken by Recorded Delivery No. V. 678007: *if we fall within Mr Pincher's generous categories* of 'subversives', we will be surveilled; let them card-index and compute our efforts if they wish. I am not yet aware that the spooks have touched me in any sensitive point: threatened my family or close friends, stolen my notes on the Muggletonian Church, or tampered with the whiskers of my favourite cat. We do not have a Prussian or Russian state.

Yet, after reading Pincher, I must understand that the State has powers not only to survey me, but to void the contents of their survey into the Fleet Street urinals. If I surmise my mail may have been opened since late 1977, when I indicated support for the ABC Defence Committee, then I must reflect what may have passed before Security's eyes. Amid all the chores, to which they are welcome, I can *think* of one quite compromising leak, an admirable Fleet Street pee, which perhaps I should save them the trouble of writing:

> HISTORIAN LINKED TO BULGARIAN EMBASSY
>
> Exclusive by Filchbag Peeper
>
> Commentators have been at a loss to explain the motives which led E. P. Thompson, a historian with long Marxist associations, to write a bitter attack on Sam Silkin, the Attorney-General, in *New Society* last month.
>
> Thompson, who left Warwick University a few years ago after being detected giving aid to student extremists, has no overt political ambitions. Why then should he have intervened so vociferously in a matter of security in which he had no direct interest, thereby giving comfort only to the KGB?
>
> I am now able to give exclusive informa-

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tion to readers, as a result of conversation with prime sources in MI5 and MI6, that Thompson has been under surveillance for some time as a contact with the Security and Defence forces of an Iron Curtain country.

On more than one occasion, a high-ranking Bulgarian officer has driven to his Worcester home. The purpose of these visits has not been disclosed . . .

There is nothing in Filchbag Peeper's report which I could bring to a libel court. My own contacts with Bulgaria dried up after the particularly foul trial of Traicho Kostov in 1949, and the subsequent disgrace of many ex-partisans as 'Titoites'. (My brother ceased, for a time, to be a National Hero, and became an 'agent of Anglo-American imperialism'.) But in the past year I have been in touch with General Slavcho Transky, one of the most heroic of the surviving partisans, who fought alongside my brother, and who survived the years of jail and disgrace. I consider it my right to welcome to our table one of my brother's comrades-in-arms, despite my publicly-expressed distaste for the Bulgarian regime. I cannot expect Filchbag Peeper, or his informants, or Mr Rees, to understand or condone such behaviour. But I do not intend to change it.

THERE IS ONE further point, one not easily made without committing the deadly sin of being 'heavy'. I have been wondering all week what was the sweet smell that entered my mind whenever I opened *Inside Story*. At first I thought it was only the sweet smell of Mr Pincher, who (on one report) is receiving £25,000 for serialisation in the *Express* of material gathered in that paper's employment. Next, I thought it might be the whiff of the Fleet Street urinals. But now I recollect the smell more clearly: encountered first on the battlefield of Cassino, when I stumbled upon some blackened six-day-old corpses of soldiers and mules. It is the smell of animal decomposition. I suppose the decaying body must be that of British Imperialism.

Mr Pincher never ceases to remind us of his 'wartime background', which brought him colleagues who 'went to the top in Whitehall'. He is always on about his own exceeding patriotism and loyalty:

> I have spent a large slice of my life investigating and trying to expose the machinations of the extreme Left against the interests of the country I love.

A good part of the biography on the dust jacket is given over to his war service. He was 'commissioned in 1941 in the 6th Armoured Division', but was transferred in 1943 to the Military College of Science, and spent the rest of the war researching into such matters as anti-tank weapons. I think we must take it that he did not see any active service, since the biography would have entered into all the details.

As it happens, I also was commissioned, a little later, in the 6th Armoured Division, and my own researches into anti-tank weapons were conducted at the receiving end. This argues no particular merit of patriotism in me: those were the circumstances. I am not even clear what I am trying to say, except that it has to do with the betrayal of the past and calumny of the dead.

One is not permitted to speak of one's wartime reminiscences today, nor is one under any impulse to do so. It is an area of general reticence: an unmentionable subject among younger friends, and perhaps a mild ridicule among those of radical opinions. All this is understood. And one understands also why it is so.

It is so, in part, because Chapman Pincher and his like have made an uncontested take-over of all the moral assets of that period; have coined the war into Hollywood block-busters and spooky paperbacks and television media; have attributed all the values of that moment to the mythic virtues of an authoritarian Right which is now, supposedly, the proper inheritor and guardian of the present nation's interests.

I walk in my garden, or stand cooking at the stove, and muse on how this came about. My memories of that war are very different. I recall a resolute and ingenious civilian army, increasingly hostile to the conventional military virtues, which became – far more than any of my younger friends will begin to credit – an anti-fascist and consciously anti-imperialist army. Its members voted Labour in 1945: knowing why, as did the civilian workers at home. Many were

> Give us back that army, and half its members, and their girl-friends and wives, would have to go onto the dossiers

infused with socialist ideas and expectations wildly in advance of the tepid rhetoric of today's Labour leaders. Give us that army back today, and half its members and their girlfriends and wives, would have to go onto the dossiers in the Wendy-houses: Left Book Club-readers, supporters of the Labour Party, the CP, ILP, Commonwealth – subversives everywhere. Our expectations may have been shallow, but this was because we were overly utopian, and ill-prepared for the betrayals at our backs.

But we were not Pincher's People! And I refuse, also, to borrow Pincher's strategies. The merits of that moment did not lie alone with the Left, and the demerits alone with the Right. Conservative soldiers were brave and effective, not only through an inherited patriotic code of class: many acquired a more democratic code as well, a settled anti-fascist commitment. These were not Pincher's People either. If any moral assets from that moment are left, let's not haggle over portions. Let us leave it at evens.

BUT YES, I DO now remember, Pincher's People were already around. They were to be found thickest in Whitehall, in Baker Street, in Shepheard s in Cairo: a few, it seems, may have been at the Military College of Science. These were the people – the genial mirror-images of Kim Philby – who intrigued ceaselessly to restore 'British interests' in the East and Near East, and capitalist enterprise in Europe; who sent Missions into exposed positions in the field, and who then failed to give them support, or double-crossed them when in action; who tried to prevent even Churchill from knowing the truth about the Yugoslav partisans, and who then tried to prevent his personal representative to Tito, Sir Fitroy Maclean, from carrying out his mission by refusing him transport, and by deliberately planning to slander him in the officers' messes of Cairo as a 'hopeless drunk, an active homosexual' and as 'consistently cowardly and unreliable' – the story of this genial 'dirty trick' has recently been told by the Brigadier himself, with characteristic bluntness.*

These are the people who shattered the anti-fascist consensus, by engineering the sending of our reluctant forces to Athens, at Christmas 1944, to crush the Greek partisans. These are the people, concealed within the strategic centres of the State, in Whitehall and in SOE, who became with Stalin the joint-architects of the Cold War; who became the eager accessories of the CIA; who trained their clones and multiplied them within the State's secret organs; who now lay claim to the whole inheritance of that war as their private asset, and who today hold the public state and the private citizen in their blackmail.

It is difficult to explain how memories affect one in middle life. For months, the past stretches behind one, as an inert record of events. Then, with little warning, the past seems suddenly to open itself up inside one – with a more palpable emotional force than the vague present – in the gesture of a long-dead friend, or in the recall of some 'spot of time' imbued with incommunicable significance. One is astonished to find oneself, while working in the garden or pottering about the kitchen, with tears on one's cheeks.

I have found myself like this more than once since reading Mr Pincher's book. I have no notion what the tears are about. They are certainly not those of self-pity. There may be something in them of shame, that we should have let that world be degraded into this. There is also some fury – that younger people, and among these some whom I most approve and admire, should have had this foul historical con passed upon them – should suppose that this is all that that generation was . . . Pincher's sort of people.

I can now see what was wrong with that generation. I was too bloody innocent by half, and some of them were too open to the world, and too loyal to each other to live. But may we be saved from this last obscenity – the lie that it is in 'loyalty' to their memory that we must now submit to prepackaged juries, tapped phones, a compliant press, a managed television, the gross suppression of public truth: to the blackmailing of the nation by Chapman Pincher's patriotic, but anonymous friends?

'Pah, pah! Give me an ounce of civet, good apothecary, to sweeten my imagination.' ●

*In P. Auty and R. Clogg: *British Policy Towards Wartime Resistance in Yugoslavia and Greece*, *Macmillan* 1975. Pp.221-8.

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London Diary

☐ I used to feel sorry for David Ennals, with the NHS collapsing under him, until I read the latest report of the Medical Defence Union, a body designed to insure doctors against patients' complaints. Everyone, as Hitler said, makes mistakes: but what about *me*? The possibilities of disaster are endless. A 30-year-old man died after an anaesthetist carelessly injected him with adrenaline instead of atropine. A 29-year-old woman, in for a simple abortion (or termination of pregnancy, as it is now euphemistically known) suffered severe brain damage under anaesthesia, and is now paralysed and unable to speak. In the West Midlands, 34 people developed hepatitis after treatment by an acupuncturist. A 26-year-old man drove his car into a manure-spreading tractor and died from inadequate anti-tetanus treatment.

Still, perhaps we should not be too hard on the medical profession. The MDU report includes a letter from an orthopaedic surgeon: 'At the completion of a hip operation I found we had an additional assistant who had escaped my notice. This took the form of a live mouse. While I understand that the nursing administrators have been casting their nets far and wide in order to obtain extra assistance for the very depleted members of the nursing staff, such assistance as this, as you will understand, is most unwelcome.' The way things are going, the poor man might well have to change his attitude.

☐ Mrs Shirley Williams is another person I do not envy. Try as she might to reduce education to the l.c.d., she is up against the kind of attitude exemplified in a graffito outside Davis's tutorial college in Hampstead. 'Education teaches nothing but obedience! Learn your Latin verbs or else take the rod on your backside, boys!' Underneath, a less educated hand has scribbled, 'Barbaric [sic] crapology'. Perhaps the only answer is to issue everyone with Ph.D. certificates at birth.

☐ The RSPCA is mightily aggrieved at Cardiff magistrates' dismissal of the case against two actors who, to make a moral point, left a goldfish gasping waterless on stage. 'It was an astounding decision,' said Mr W. J. Jordan, a vet and chief wild life officer for the RSPCA. 'Nor did the press report it correctly. Under the 1911 Protection of Animals Act, you can be cruel to a free-living rabbit, but not if it lives in a hutch in the back garden. The Act applies only to domestic or captive animals. The magistrates accepted that I had proved that goldfish could feel pain: but they ruled that it was not captive. It obviously was – otherwise what would it be doing there?'

The RSPCA takes its legal responsibilities seriously. Recent cases include two tigers suffering mental cruelty while being transported in a cage; and a pet tarantula which was being improperly fed by its owner. 'We have a very interesting case in the pipeline concerning tortoises,' Mr Jordan added, 'but I can't talk about it at the moment.' It leaves me gasping.

☐ Intrigued by my world-shattering revelation last week that the number 1729 is the lowest which can be expressed in two ways as the sum of two cubes. Mr Edward Playfair, of Chelsea College, confessed himself unable to find a smaller number with the same properties. In reparation, however, he added that $9^3 - 6^3 = 8^3 + 1^3$. Is 513, he asks, the lowest number which expresses the difference between two cubes and the sum of two others? Thanks very much, but I'll leave it to readers better qualified.

☐ John Jones, the newly-elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford, is already beginning to suffer from the snidery that usually accompanies such events. He is accused of having been sacked as law tutor at Merton, before he went into English. Others accuse him, when he lectures on Romantic literature, of bringing in too much Hegel and Beethoven. An affable man, Mr Jones is not all that perturbed by the criticisms. 'I was never sacked,' he says. 'I gave the law up. I thought the bar would give me time to write; but, having been interrupted by the war, my tutor said 'Go on with Latin and Greek, become a don and do your writing. There I was stuck with a part-time job, teaching law with only an undergraduate knowledge. It would have been irresponsible to go on.' While in the wilderness, he wrote a very good book, *The Egotistical Sublime*. 'About a year after that, Humphrey House, the Dickens expert, dropped dead. Again, it's a vanished world, academically, and I got the job.'

What about Hegel and Beethoven? 'Well, they can always stay away if they don't like it. It's not as if I were trying to link Romanticism with cancer research, is it?' He had the same problem over his book on Aristotle and Greek tragedy – 'people accused me of neglecting my students' – and will doubtless experience the same problem over his forthcoming work on Dostoievsky. Were I at Oxford, I would consider myself fortunate to have as mentor a man of such wide interests. He plays the cello. 'Do you ever buy any records?' he asked. Somewhat miffed, I upbraided him with his ignorance of the fact that I review records regularly. 'Sorry about that', he replied, 'but I bet *you* didn't know that the highlight of my footballing career was playing for the Ceylon police in 1944. They play barefoot but, as a special favour, they allowed me to wear plimsolls.'

☐ So far as I am concerned, the more sexes, the better. I thought everyone was multisexual these days until I noticed a rash of advertisements prompted by the Briggs amendment due to be debated in California this week, which seeks to ban any teacher suspected of homosexuality. Unable to attend all the meetings, I chose two extremes. The main speaker at Intergroup, in the Unitarian Church hall in Golders Green, was an engaging young fellow who teaches science in a girls' school. 'I couldn't start my career by living a lie,' he explained, 'so I told the girls I was gay. The reaction was stunning – I've never heard a silence like it. It's not that I want to convert people – I just want them to be aware of the limitless possibilities.' The second speaker, sporting a mere gold ear-ring, was rather more aggressive. He reacted violently when I asked whether he was tempted to seduce his boy pupils. 'Certainly not!' The whole audience, indistinguishable in drab Aran sweaters and sparse beards, went 'tut-tut', and I left in disgrace.

It was much more fun outside W. H. Smith's in Notting Hill on Saturday, where *Gay Alliance* held a demonstration against the shop's refusal to stock *Gay News* ('a magazine on a par with the *Times Literary Supplement*', a supporter claimed). Everyone was asked to wear black. There were decaying *soutanes*, and black velvet cloaks with rhinestones. 'You look marvellous, darlings,' one chirrupped, as two demonstrators in drag – one in long crepe-de-chine with a black veil hiding his luxuriant moustache, emerged from the Underground.

A march had been planned, complete with coffin signifying the death of press freedom, to the American Embassy, but the police were difficult. 'We have had no notification of this march, Madam', an inspector said, 'and from the address and telephone number on the letter, we were unable to contact the organisers.' (I hesitate to mention the case of the man who denied stealing a pork pie, on the grounds that it had proved uneatable.)

'You've no idea what we have to go through', said one homosexual. 'It's not so bad in Notting Hill, which is pretty gay, anyway, but go down to Brixton, baby, and see what happens. A gang of yobboes broke into my house one day and beat me up.' Another chimed in with the fact that he had once had a bag of fish and chips thrown in his face – 'such a waste, they're terribly expensive these days'.

Ruth Hall

This England

Prizes: £3 book token for first entry, £2 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

☐ Brave Elaine Dale of Grimsby, who was born without arms as a victim of thalidomide 18 years ago, made history today when she gave birth to a daughter. Peter, the man who swept her off her feet when he popped the question only a week after they met, married her last October. She proved to him that she like any good housewife could cook, clean, wash, iron and look pretty for him when he came home by applying make-up and fixing her hair, all with her feet. – *Scunthorpe Evening Telegraph* (Eileen Grayson)

☐ Mr Ward went on: 'The effect of the offence has caused much heart-searching and embarrassment. He is the rural dean of Pocklington and it is almost inconceivable that he should be arrested and brought before you in court.' – *The Guardian* (D.O.'Shea)

☐ He knows England well, having spent two years in the mid-1950s reading PPE at Christ Church, Oxford. – *The Times* (Andrew Gray)

☐ I belong to the National Front and I'm not a Nazi. Why don't the ANL stop calling the NF a Nazi Front because we're not. We're just ordinary people who are racists not f***ing Nazis. – Letter in *Sounds* (C. Davis)

☐ The biggest bankruptcy in British history became a little larger yesterday when it was disclosed that William Stern, 43, the former property dealer, had 'overlooked' a possible £2 million debt. His total liabilities are now more than £106 million, Mr Alan Sales, the Official Receiver, said in the London Bankruptcy Court. Mr Stern's assets have been valued at £10,070. The bankruptcy had been described as the world's biggest, said Mr Sales. 'But really it is a very ordinary bankruptcy with noughts at the end.' – *Daily Telegraph* (John Griffiths)

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First Person

Arthur Marshall

Let Them Eat Crusts

A superbly informative 'household hints' volume has come my way and it is one which, rather late in the day though it may be, is clearly going to revolutionise my home life. Not that the actual structure and setting of 'Myrtlebank' will be in any way altered. Outwardly it will retain the 'pleasant seat' so much admired both in the castle of Lady Macbeth and in the career of Lady Godiva. But friends who are kind enough to come and stay with me next year will, if they have been before, soon notice a new freshness everywhere and a markedly novel intellectual excitement in its spacious rooms and halls. There will be laughter on the stairs and richly unusual smells from the kitchen regions. Nothing, least of all the host, will be as it was.

Opening the door to my guests, I can now instantly provide them with stimulating facts (do you realise that carrots were not known before 1547?) for them to mull over (it would take 27,600 spiders to produce 1 lb of web) while they are thoughtfully unpacking. If, as may indeed be the case after a tiring journey, they find these fascinating titbits rather heavy going before they've seen even the outside of a gin bottle, I am now in a position tactfully to lighten the atmosphere with a side-splitting conundrum. 'Where,' I shall ask, with the confident half-smile of somebody who knows that he's on to a winner, 'and on what did Charles the First's executioner dine?' Puzzled frowns and head-shakings and givings-up. 'He took a chop at the King's Head.' Screams of joyous merriment, and down we go to tea, which I have carefully checked for adulterations (rascally grocers, keen on adding weight, may well have tossed in handfuls of shredded sycamore leaves).

It is a book, jammed with helpful matter, jokes and mottoes and called *Enquire Within Upon Everything* that has so magically widened my social horizons. It is true that it was originally printed in 1856 (Barrie & Jenkins have now exactly reproduced it at £4.95 a time) but many a good tune is played on an old violin, as the book will be the first to tell you in the page headings ('Every Pea Helps To Fill The Peck') that grace its text. These headings keep us all on our toes and range from moral advice ('Take Things Always By The Smooth Handle'), through useful medical tips ('The Best Physicians are Dr Diet, Dr Quiet and Dr Merryman) and on to statements such as 'A Bird's-Nest Is A Natural Egg-Cup' and 'The Sea is the Heaving Bosom of the World', to which the only possible riposte is a fervent 'yes indeedy'.

It is in the field of domestic life that our anonymous compilers really shine and here in these mid-Victorian years I much regret to say that women's libbers and socialists will find naught for their comfort. Women are women and the poor are poor and let them all remain so. 'Average weight of a man's brain,' it announces, 'is 3½ lbs: of a woman's, 2 lbs 11 oz', so there you are then! Nevertheless, a section is devoted to How To Treat a Wife ('First, get a wife; secondly, be patient and sometimes yield your wishes to hers'), followed by an injunction to Hide Thy Domestic Wounds, which may or may not be black eyes. And as to the poor, if you are yourself munching bread, 'let your maid eat the crusts', and when it comes to sleep and bedding, dry beech-tree leaves are highly recommended for low bank balances as being 'nice and springy. They smell grateful and will not harbour vermin,' so *that's* all right.

I am not quite sure where in 'Myrtlebank' I am going to place my Leech Barometer. By the front door, probably, and near the seaweed, also a handy weather indicator, that I collected at Teignmouth. Full instructions are here given for assembling the barometer and nothing could be easier than to pop a healthy leech (though whether it has recently dined and on whom is not stated) into a nearly full bottle of water capped with muslin. On clement days, the leech will lie motionless, coiled in a spiral form and enjoying the sunshine. If wind is expected, it will become extremely agitated, 'moving through its habitation with amazing swiftness', If there's rain about, it will climb out of the water and twitch convulsively. If it's frosty, it sinks to the bottom and sulks. As to where healthy leeches may nowadays be obtained, I am a little vague. I haven't actually spotted a leech counter at the admirable Boots, so it will have to be Harrods.

The tips and wrinkles come thick and fast and totally higgledy-piggledy, causing startling juxtapositions. We have hardly digested the advice that 'scandal must be lived down' before we are extracting grease spots from book bindings and then pickling gherkins. 'The art of being agreeable' is rapidly followed by a recipe for rat poison (hog's lard and phosphorus tastily blended with whiskey), instructions for making 12 gallons of ink, and advice on how to win at whist. We flash from 'insect stings, what to do about', via a wise caution ('Never meddle with gunpowder by candle-light') to how to make oyster ketchup. We have barely finished modelling a cave from old corks before we are making seawater and removing ink-stains from mahogany.

It is only on the subject of food that our editors seem to falter and lose confidence. Sometimes they are absolutely on the right lines ('The heaviest lobsters are the best') and their mouth-watering recipes for curried oysters brings us cheering to our feet ('Let a hundred large oysters be opened into a basin without losing one drop of liquor'). But then, what are we to make, after advice about How To Choose Friends, of a recipe for stewed water-cress (How to Lose Friends, one would have thought) and the claim that boiled radishes, tied in bundles and served on toast, 'are excellent'? What sort of culinary nonsense is this? In the remarks on the proper construction of calves' feet jelly, there is a sentence to please our lynx-eyed NS 'This English' section ('*It is better to buy the feet of* the butcher than at the tripe-shop').

Our editors go to endless trouble to make even the simplest matters crystal-clear. Walking, for instance. 'The head must be held in such a position that the eyes are directed forwards,' *not* sideways. 'In walking, it is necessary to bear in mind that the locomotion is to be performed entirely by the legs'. Awkward persons, they complain, 'rock from side to side'. Nice to know at last where one has been going wrong. It is all too easy to get into a muddle. 'How to Make Camphor Balls to Stop Chaps' I naturally took to be a sort of doggie 'keep-away' for unchaperoned girls at the Assembly Rooms, but not a bit of it. And 'Rape for Canaries' turns out to be advice on the kind of seed to feed to these charming birds.

You may possibly enjoy sharpening your senses of humour on a few more of the delightful conundra and here I wouldn't for one moment dream of interfering with the compiler's use of italics. These have the great advantage of telling us when the joke has arrived and it is time to smile. There is a fine conundrum on the very first page which gets us off to a flying start. A man went to market and bought two fish, but when he got home, he found that the two fish had become three fish. How so? The answer is, he bought two mackerel and one *smelt*. Well then, when is a plant more to be dreaded than a mad dog? When it's *madder*. Sometimes a bracketed explanation is supplied, seldom superfluously, so that nobody misses their full allowance of fun. For example, when may a nobleman's property be said to be all feathers? Give up? When his estates are all *entails* (hen-tails). Just one more for, so to speak, the road. Why should a gouty man make his will? So that he may have his *legatees* (leg at ease). Speaking of which, there is a remedy for gout which advises us to 'rub our parts' with gin and water. *Can* this be right? And what a waste of gin.

Roger Woddis

C.B. EYEWASH

Sir John Methven, Director General of the CBI, in conference at Brighton this week, wants pay *curbs but calls price controls 'economic stupidity'.*

Along the prom they used to stroll
Before the weather turned so chilly,
But by and large and on the whole,
Though pay is frozen willy-nilly,
To do the same with price control
Would patently be bloody silly.

As any working-man must know
Who listens to his gentle master,
Pay is the cause of all our woe,
The provenance of all disaster,
From Dagenham to Tokyo,
From falling hair to falling plaster.

The trouble is, we never learn
From those our betters in Rolls-Royces,
Who show such fatherly concern
And offer us such splendid choices:
To stand with those who also earn
Or robber barons with soft voices.

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Letters to the Editor

Armageddon at The Times

Sir, It is dismaying that your report about *The Sunday Times* and *The Times* (NS 3 November), which your contributors profess to respect, should be such a mischievous mish-mash of fact, supposition and sneer. All I would like to do here is set the record right where I am supposed to be quoted.

Your reporter says that two weeks ago I told a staff meeting that the new technology was a failure. I did not. The remark quoted – out of context, of course – was made *not two weeks ago, but in July.* I went on to say that there had been disappointments with all the editing systems after the initial euphoria, and that we were fortunate in having the American newspapers bear most of the burden of proving the systems.

After that meeting I visited some American plants. (Another bit of malicious nonsense in your piece is that I spent a 'good deal' of time in the US on the Kissinger project: the total time this year is 1½ days). On that visit I was happy to be told and see for myself that *The Spectator* at Hamilton, Ontario, which has the system we have adopted, has made enormous improvements and was satisfied with the editorial performance. I reported my findings to the Board; and two weeks ago I told the staff meeting that our system, with improved computer power, was capable of transforming our production: quite the contrary to what your article suggested by its assiduous confusion of dates and selected quotation. Of course there are problems, but the new technology is here to stay. The moaners would have complained to the inventor of the wheel that it needed frequent oiling. Perhaps next time your contributors wish to report my views they would do me the courtesy of asking me. In a crisis as grave as the one we face, reporting can make a very important contribution if it is of the highest order. The NEW STATESMAN should be able to do better.

HAROLD EVANS
Editor

The Sunday Times
200 Gray's Inn Road
London WC1

Sir, The Times's management march on to Armageddon. Their blitzkrieg is aimed at panicking the workers – under threat of closure – to sell jobs, cut their throats and give the board a blank cheque on new technology. But your revelation that there are now serious doubts on whether the technology even works turns the whole exercise into near farce.

Journalists will not find this at all surprising. The National Union of Journalists, in the spring of 1977, set up a special committee to investigate new technology – particularly direct input systems as envisaged by *The Times.* One area probed by us was Thomson Regional Newspapers. The company, over the years, had introduced computer systems – much less sophisticated than that planned for London – into regional printing centres throughout Britain. In each place we found the same shambles, the same management mistakes. Aberdeen, the latest centre to go on line, turns up problems that were evident in the company's English centres five years ago. What a batting record!

Now they plan to crash on with even more sophisticated technology at Printing House Square. Leading the exercise is Dugal Nisbet-Smith, the general manager, recruited earlier this year from the Mirror Group's Glasgow plant. (The Glasgow exercise, based on computer technology, is known locally as Disneyland – 'That disnae work . . . and that disnae work').

I have studied direct input systems in operation in the United States and in Europe. Since journalists have to operate the system and both key in and edit the material on screen, it seems obvious that they should be consulted. The Times Newspapers management have not consulted their journalists. Instead, a fortnight ago, and under threat of the sack, the Chapel received a long list of what journalists would be required to do in their new roles. *The Times*'s attitude is not unique. In my experience, newspaper managements will listen to smooth talking computer salesmen rather than consult their own men who at the end of the day will have to work the new systems. Even worse, the British managements all faithfully subscribe to IFRA, the industry's own research and development unit, based in Germany and serving the world. Unfortunately, as the IFRA experts themselves admitted to me, the British will not always accept the advice of their own paid-for research unit. Fools, of course, know only after they have suffered.

BILL ROBERTSON
Chairman
ADM Committee on Technology
National Union of Journalists
314/320 Gray's Inn Road
London WC1

Sir, Your article on Times Newspapers (NS 3 November) contains one of the more common misconceptions related to new technology (in this case composing) and newspapers. The Times project is not 'a more ambitious project than . . . Mirror Group Newspapers'. It is different. It is different because the products are different. The old-fashioned method of producing newspapers meant that whatever their content they had to conform to Caxton's technology. Today the technology can be tailored to the product – a much more satisfying situation. This is what the Mirror has done and the result is the first system in the world to output full pages for publication complete with graphics, logos, rules – all generated electronically to produce the complete page.

The content of *The Times* is such that one may argue whether Times Newspapers Limited might wish to have this facility or, alternatively, the direct input system you describe, although the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Nevertheless in stating the composing problems, as you see them, at *The Times* please do not denigrate the *Mirror* achievement on the way. Further, if Mr Harold Evans would like to see the future of Fleet Street he can easily find time to come to look at it – at the Mirror.

JOSEPH MAY

Mirror Group Newspapers
Holborn Circus
London EC1

Motability

Christopher Hird replies to last week's correspondence: In their anxiety to abuse me and applaud the generosity of the banks some of our correspondents seemed to miss the point: the Motability scheme hands to the banks £100 million of capital allowances to offset against their taxable profits. Mr Quinton – who is a director of Barclays Bank U.K. and deputy-chairman of their finance company Mercantile Credit – started off by saying this was not true and then implicitly accepted that it was by saying 'the banks have little difficulty in making ordinary commercial use of the tax allowances.' This statement should be set against the fact that, according to their annual report, during 1977 there was no net increase in Barclays Bank's £193 million commitment to leasing. Mr Quinton carefully avoided claiming that the banks lose money on Motability – 'the annual amount of profit foregone by the banks will be well in excess of £1 million', he writes. The 'substantial' nature of this should be set against the value of the scheme in reducing the banks' tax bills and their combined profits, from all their operations, of well over £800 million last year.

Our correspondents also spent some time praising the generosity of the car companies, motor dealers and insurance companies. It should be said that British Leyland specifically told me that given the size and nature of the Motability business, it was a good commercial proposition and it appealed as such to British Leyland's dealers, with whom the company negotiated. It seems bizarre to attribute, as Mr Wilson did, the removal of the Road Fund Tax to Motability, when this has been a demand, as he also says, for years. Indeed, in their proposals, UDT asked for this. On the UDT scheme, I fear Mr Wilson's memory must be failing him. The final proposals, did not involve any government subsidy to meet interest charges; cars were to be covered by the UDT warranty, which guarantees replacement of engine, power and electrical parts, even when they fail through normal wear and tear – standard servicing was, however, to be paid for. In addition, as my article made clear, work was underway on an insurance scheme. Finally, UDT's submission *did* refer to cars other than the Leyland mini.

The system of 100 per cent capital allowances was introduced to encourage industrial investment. Leasing capacity – which depends on the successful exploitation of these concessions – is limited. Whatever the needs of the disabled, it therefore seems inappropriate to use leasing capacity to help people buy cars. To say so is not in anyway the same as saying the disabled should not have complete mobility. Indeed I agree absolutely with Mr Wilson that independent mobility should not be a luxury for disabled people. Which is why I find it curious that he so uncritically supports a scheme which, as Peter Townsend says, does not provide a free public service allocated on the basis of occupational and social need.

Changing IQs

Sir, I do not know whether David Hencke is the educational correspondent of the NS, nor would I wish to support or attack his comments in 'Research standards of the *Evening News*' but one would have thought that a man, apparently taking a keen interest in matters of education, would know what is meant by IQ! Whatever people make of their intelligence depends entirely on work, but the fact remains that one's IQ does not alter from the cradle to the grave, so that his extraordinary remark 'anyone with an IQ of a ten year old' is somewhat ignorant.

DAVID WENDON

4 Corfon Road
Lowestoft, Suffolk.

Jobs and Leyland

Sir, Your commentator (NS 27 October) criticised British Leyland's attempt to introduce two-shift working on the grounds that it conflicted with the aim of increasing employment and reducing the working week. A truly remarkable *non sequitur*! Two-shift working has the effect of increasing the number of workers engaged in relation to the capital equipment used, and this means employing more workers while reducing the costs of production. The unsocial hours involved in shift work may not be popular with the existing labour force, but by their action they are actively preventing the employment of additional workers. One might have thought that your commentator would be aware of these simple facts of life.

ALEC NOVE
Department of International Economic Studies
University of Glasgow

Super under Hitler

Sir, I am sorry to have to query David Caute's very generous review of my Piscator book (NS 20 October), but I never said anything so sweeping as that 'it was safer for a German communist intellectual to live under Hitler than under Stalin'. I was talking only about the case of Piscator himself, and the options facing him at a particular moment in the autumn of 1936. The grim fates I cited as 'actuarial' evidence were of people who could be linked with him: Russians and Hungarians as well as Germans. The letter from Wilhelm Pieck which I quote suggests that even he felt the danger, but clearly the calculations would have been different in each individual case.

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I would hate to be thought ignorant of the horrors facing active anti-Nazis under Hitler at that time, let alone the subsequent extermination of the Jews. But Piscator was not Jewish and it is debatable whether Goebbels ever saw the left-wing theatre (or cinema) as a serious threat. The examples of Erich Engel, Caspar Neher, Piel Jutzi, G. W. Pabst and Piscator's own designer Traugott Müller rather suggest that he did not.

JOHN WILLETT

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Women ignored

Sir, As a regular reader of your paper I have for some time been concerned by the minimal amount of reviews with any understanding of feminist issues. I was particularly incensed by the review of *Women and Children First*. It may not be important to Michael Mason personally to have grasped the issues involved here, but as a reviewer his lack of clear thinking suggests that he has missed the point of the book entirely. Surely in a book of great interest to many readers and with specific feminist content an informed critique would have been more helpful.

ALEX CHEALES

53 Lady Somerset Road
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The liquid cosh

Sir, John McVicar (NS 27 October) writes: 'It would be wrong to suggest that every prisoner taking his daily psychotropic 'tots' is pressurised into it by prison medical staff.' It is true that prisoners who accept psychotropic drugs do so voluntarily; but it should also be pointed out that prison inmates have been known to have 'voluntarily' walked into doors and bounced off walls.

The circumstances in which George Ince was first 'voluntarily' treated are a prime example (documented in 'Bird in a twisted cage', by Dr Tony Whitehead, *Health and Social Service Journal*, August 1977): on the night of 27 October 1976, he was awoken and told that he was in the process of making an escape.

SHAUN BEST

School of Social Sciences
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Asians in the East End

Sir, Francis Wheen's article (NS 20 October) gave something of the flavour of the vicious racist situation faced by Asian people in East London. Perhaps it is scarcely surprising that ethnic minority communities, particularly after the Virk case, are somewhat disillusioned with local community relations councils (CRCs). The track record of CRCs is often just a reflection of the watery show of support given by local authorities to combatting racism. CRCs do face heavy local political pressures and are often kept deliberately underfunded to ensure their continuing weakness. But it does not necessarily mean that CRCs buckle under these pressures. You implied that our CRC had been such a victim. I would suggest that our work does not point to this conclusion. We have, for example, asked all local government candidates to make a public commitment against racialism and have been roundly abused for our pains by candidates from both major parties as blackmailing and impertinent; written to the Home Secretary about the Virk case and taken up all cases of alleged bias with the Police. Redbridge CRC has not, as you reported, yet had its grant cut although there is still that danger, and has had strong support from all the ethnic minority communities in its campaign to retain its grant.

None of this proves that CRCs are successful in changing racist attitudes. They are an imperfect response to the problem of racialism in society but they do represent a focus for community involvement in fighting racialism.

The growth of black self-help groups of the kind described is a welcome development as they will ensure that the whole anti-racist and anti-fascist movement will have a more sensitive appreciation of the problems faced by black people in our society. Moreover they will see to it that the usual bromides ladled out in response to anti-racist initiatives will in future be unacceptable.

IAN HAIG
Community Relations Officer
Methodist Church Hall
Ilford Lane
Ilford, Essex

Scholarkins

Sir, Some of your readers may want the answer to Michael Stone's question (NS 20 October) about obscure words in Auden's *Vespers*. Sordumes and Doppions are obsolete wind instruments described in Michael Praetorius' *Syntagma Musicum* of 1619. One reason Auden included doppions in the poem's description of his personal Eden may have been that no-one, including Praetorius, had any idea of what they looked like (that is, until recently: two have turned up in Verona). There is no German equivalent for the Italian *Doppioni*, but the sordume was called a *Sordun* in German-speaking Innsbruck in 1596. The hellikins who cavort through ruined drawing-rooms are not weapons but, in American dialect usage, disruptive young persons rather like the hellions who are defined in the new Supplement to the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

While I am on the subject of *Vespers*, may I point out that Peter Conrad, two pages away from Mr Stone, is a bit misleading in his account of an apolitical later Auden wanting reclamation by grace? This may apply to Auden's work in the forties, but not afterwards. The *Horae Canonicae* sequence from the early fifties, of which *Vespers* is a part, explores the complexities of the civil realm with a subtlety and depth no other modern poet even approaches. The sequence doesn't try to devise political remedies, but it does dramatise the nature of the disease, and that may be a great deal more useful.

EDWARD MENDELSON

Department of English
Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut

More equal than others

Sir, I agree with Marion Lowe (NS 27 October): the recent decision made by an Employment Appeals Tribunal, that women who work fewer hours than male colleagues are not entitled to receive the same hourly rate, despite the fact that they may be doing the same work, makes complete nonsense of the Equal Pay Act. A peculiar factor in this case was that the employers conceded that the lady in question, Mrs Handley, was doing the same work as her fellow male employee. Not only is the judgment a serious attack on the purpose behind the Equal Pay Act, but it must also be contrary to the basis of the Sex Discrimination Act.

On behalf of the National Union of Tailors & Garment Workers, I represented Mrs Handley at the original Industrial Tribunal hearing and during the course of the hearing I made the point to the Tribunal that if they decided that a woman, doing like work, should receive a lesser hourly rate than a man, there would be little point in having an Equal Pay Act.

Part of Mr Justice Slynn's judgment was, in my view, somewhat sinister. He quoted Section 119 of the Treaty of Rome. That Section apparently refers to women doing the 'same job', it does not use the word 'work'; the Judge therefore deduced that if a woman was doing fewer hours than a man she was not doing the 'same job'. Using that as a criterion and taking his argument to a logical conclusion, every employee in a factory, regardless of their work, working full time, should receive the same pay, as, according to the learned judge, they are doing the 'same job'.

There surely must be a case for judges, prior to appointment, having to work in industry, on the shop floor. Certainly that ought to apply when they have to deal with matters beyond their ken.

As an aside, I certainly believe that in all cases which involve the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts there ought to be at least one woman as a member of the Tribunal.

HARRY KAY

8 Laburnum House
Bradwell Avenue, Dagenham

Colin MacInnes

Sir, I have been asked by the literary executors of the late Colin MacInnes to write his biography, and I wonder if I might, through your columns, appeal to anyone who knew him at any time of his life – and has information about him, letters from him or whatever — to get in touch with me.

I would particularly appreciate any information about his earlier years – not so much about his childhood in Australia, as the times in the Thirties when he worked for an English company in Belgium and studied at the Euston Road School of Art in London, and the war years when he was an NCO (in intelligence) in Gibraltar, England and latterly in Germany after the victorious advance on Berlin.

All information will be treated confidentially, letters etc. returned promptly.

TONY GOULD

10 Lincoln Road
London N2

Old school ties

Sir, During the weeks since, two months or so ago, your contributor Francis Wheen wrote an article called 'First Class Fees for Second Class Education', I have paid particular attention to the correspondence which he sparked off. Now, though a Mr A. J. Hurst wrote a letter touching on Public Schools in the issue of 13 October, it – the correspondence – seems to have halted. However, as your rather tetchy Mr Howard is no longer with you and there is a more relaxed attitude all round the NEW STATESMAN, I, who could not reach my typewriter earlier, would like to add one *last* letter containing two questions for Mr Wheen. (I feel qualified to do so as, in his extreme youth, his coughs were cured, his grazes bandaged and his socks darned by my own hands or those of my sister-matrons.)

Why, oh why did his critical faculties desert him at Harrow when he heard the story of his Headmaster being called before the School Governors about the recent 'poor' results in examinations? (Mr Wheen did very well indeed in his O and A levels, and was accepted happily by London University – Royal Holloway College.) Did he not understand that in every Public School there is always, at some time, this story, and in 99 cases out of 100 it is apocryphal? He seems to have accepted it unchecked . . . and he used to be such a clever little boy.

Does he realise, one cannot help asking oneself, that none of his state school chums, however well thought of by their preceptors, would, in their early twenties, have the ability, the knowledge of whom to consult and the sheer self-confidence to write, as Mr Wheen has just managed to do quite successfully, an article on 'The Mind of the New Pope' (surely a large subject to tackle)? It seems only about ten years since we said good-bye to him, and I hope I may be forgiven for wondering whether his previous NS article was not just slightly redolent of 'Biting the hand that fed him' – my actual hand! – . . . and he used to be such a nice little boy.

But we liked having him here, and wish him well in his undoubtedly promising future.

MARY DUNCAN

South Lodge
Copthorne, Sussex

BINDERS

If you wish to keep your NEW STATESMAN in good condition you should have a binder. It holds a half-year's copies and costs only £3 (£5 for two). Please send remittance to Eve Suckling, New Statesman, 10 Great Turnstile, London WC1.

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

David Watt

Trust in Princes

Robert Kennedy and his Times by ARTHUR M. SCHLESINGER, JR *Deutsch* £10.95

'A decade after his death Robert Kennedy still haunts the American imagination.' This assertion, which stands at the head of an ineffably pretentious blurb on Arthur Schlesinger's dust jacket is not, I think, true. The Kennedy clan as a whole, with its doom-laden brilliance, certainly has a haunting quality; and the glamorous shade of the dead President will continue to mock every aging political hack on the American or international scene. Robert Kennedy is different. Most Americans, in my experience, do not particularly want to remember him. And, being a nation of Freudian amnesiacs, they succeed pretty well in forgetting. Robert's connection with three of the most profound convulsions of American life in the last 30 years – McCarthyism, the Civil Rights Movement, and Vietnam – was too intimate and too ambiguous for comfort; which is why the prospect of Arthur Schlesinger's conjuration of him seems to have been viewed with rather mixed feelings in America.

It is not surprising that conservative Democrats should find their memories of Robert Kennedy uncongenial. He was too earnest, too boy-scoutish and above all too rude for most of their tastes. Liberal distrust was (and for that matter still is) more significant. It is true that an early assignment as junior assistant to the late unlamented Senator Joe McCarthy was a bad start. But this might have been pardoned as a youthful indiscretion if the taint of ruthlessness, self-seeking opportunism and disregard of the due processes of law had not hung around so many of Kennedy's subsequent actions.

The labour unions noted his obsessive pursuit of the Teamsters; and the black community his willingness, as Attorney General, to allow Martin Luther King's telephone to be tapped. Hubert Humphrey's faction believed that Kennedy had at least condoned the use of dirty tricks against them when he was running his campaign in the 1960 Wisconsin Primary, and in the subsequent Presidential campaign he hacked the shins of innumerable Party workers. Finally in 1968, just when all these groups, desperate for leadership during the Vietnam crisis, were beginning to be reconciled to Kennedy as their natural hope, he first refused to run against Johnson and then, when Eugene McCarthy showed the way, 'filched' the anti-war campaign as if it was his right. No doubt if Kennedy's 1968 campaign had been completed, many of the liberal battalions would have rallied behind him in the end (though Humphrey would probably still have won the Democratic nomination). But he was shot before the reconciliation was complete, and his reputation has been frozen in the contorted clichés of 1968.

Arthur Schlesinger's attempt at a wholehearted rehabilitation is massive, opinionated, and full of artful persuasion, not all of it persuasive. The Kennedy opponents get excessively short shrift. Flawed heroes like Eugene McCarthy and Lyndon Johnson, both of whom had very good reasons for loathing Bobby Kennedy, deserve a less perfunctory attempt at understanding than Schlesinger can bring himself to give them; and even genuine ogres like J. Edgar Hoover and Jimmy Hoffa had some justice on their side in their dealings with Bobby if in no other respect. They were all in varying degrees reprehensible characters, but the impression given by Kennedy at the time of his first struggles with them and by Schlesinger in describing these struggles is that their moral turpitude was less important than the fact that they were resisting a Kennedy – who naturally had a divine right to grab power at their expense. You will gather from the tone of this remark that I shared – as correspondent in Washington during some of the Kennedy heydays – and to some extent still share, much of the instinctive dislike of Robert that I have been describing. As with Tony Benn and Lord Longford, I found it irritating to be kicked in the complacencies by one whose self-aggrandisement usually seemed to be served by the act. Yet Schlesinger's book has the merit of proving that irritation is not enough, and that when it is removed Kennedy can be seen as more serious, more witty, more human and more admirable than he allowed himself to appear to those who were not his friends or political devotees.

This feat turns on establishing propositions which have often been stated before but which the vast accumulation of details in Schlesinger's long and lucid biography put beyond question. The first is what hell it was to be the offspring of Joseph Kennedy. The founding father's relentless pressure was enough to turn all his sons into screaming neurotics. John took refuge in irony, Edward in lies. Robert, with perhaps the least natural ability of any of them, became entirely consumed with a competitive desire to prove himself to this awful old man; and his aggressiveness, his restless energy, his perpetual public air of aching tenseness, his melancholy, was the result.

There was also the handicap of being John Kennedy's younger brother. Of course, if John had not become President, Robert would presumably have remained just another sharp, crusading lawyer of the kind that Washington has by the dozen for a dime. The price of being elevated above the crowd was that his relationship to the President dominated everthing else in the political career which he was now forced to pursue. While his brother was alive it cramped his style, though he was glad to let it do so; and after Dallas, though it endowed him with charisma, it limited his ability to profit from the inheritance. His relations with President Johnson were made impossible and almost every political initiative he took was weakened by charges that it was designed to overthrow the usurper and restore Camelot. The fear of this accusation seems to have lain at the root of his initial refusal to run against LBJ in 1968 and hence to his fatal confrontation with Eugene McCarthy.

The California Primary campaign, at the end of which Kennedy was killed, marked the moment at which he finally succeeded in climbing out of this hereditary cocoon and began to spread his wings. The magic began to work for Bobby, and not simply for the ghost of Jack. In part, of course, this was because the central issue of the campaign was the Vietnam war – an issue on which the American public, rightly or wrongly, believed John Kennedy would have found himself at odds with Robert. There was also, in California, an issue – namely the plight of the impoverished Mexican immigrants – which was very much Robert's own. But the truth goes deeper. By some peculiar chemistry, the bits and pieces of Robert Kennedy's political personality suddenly came together and he genuinely began to resemble, even to those who had disliked him, a national leader.

Schlesinger would maintain, of course, that he had the heart of the matter in him all along. Certainly he was naturally brave, even reckless, and he seems to have had an instinctive sympathy for the oppressed. He also possessed a fundamentalist anxiety to fight evil and do good. The problem was to reconcile this yearning with his almost pathological urge to excel and with the exigencies of Kennedy politics. One might say that the consequent wild fluctuation between extreme idealism and crude, 'no-shit' power-play was very typically American; but it was no less uncomfortable for that.

His saving grace was his willingness to listen and learn. This gradually replaced cynicism with judgment and harnessed his idealism to more realistic ends. In the matter of civil rights he began on the cynical side – dragging his feet because he thought that an active policy on the part of the Justice Department would harm his brother in the South. Then the attitude of Southern white politicians, namely George Wallace, aroused his combativeness and the passionate denunciations of him by the black community engaged his emotions. By the end he had found a balance of being able to identify with black aspirations without losing all hold on political reality. In the foreign-policy field he began as a conventional anti-communist crusader much impressed by General Maxwell Taylor and the school of counter-insurgency theorists who spent so much time in the early Sixties trying to subvert and overthrow Castro. The Cuban missile crisis, in which he played a supporting role, showed that things were not so simple. Vietnam proved the dangers of his brother's globalism but at the same time the success of his own visits to Indonesia, South Africa and Latin America suggested that American idealism had a role. He never, I think, achieved a synthesis on all this, but he was certainly wiser and more moderate at the end of his career than at its beginning.

The case for Robert Kennedy is that his struggle to achieve this resolution within himself was exemplary, honourable, and headed for success. It is certainly arguable that if he had survived he would have been more successful at reconciling the poles of American society and the American temperament than

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Nixon, Ford or Carter. The case against him is the case against America – that this reconciliation simply cannot be achieved, that most of the world's problems cannot be 'beaten' in the strict sense, and that competitive idealism does not bring peace but a sword. Arthur Schlesinger's attempt to show that Robert Kennedy would have succeeded where others failed seems to me to try to prove too much. It is filled with hindsight, not only Schlesinger's but Kennedy's own, thanks to extended use of the Oral History Program, which lends a spurious authority to the fallible memory of historical actors. The distrust of Kennedy was not simply a misunderstanding. It was in part a perception of what he had been and in part, perhaps, a distrust for a bit of their own minds. What this biography shows is how hard Kennedy tried and how far he had come. Perhaps he might have brought it off.

Geoffrey Grigson

Owl Women

The Penguin Book of Women Poets edited by Carol Cosman, Joan Keefe and Kathleen Weaver *Allen Lane* £5.95

There are objects which are hard to get hold of. They are hard to see, like jelly-fish or shrimps in water. They are smooth or round or both, they have no projections, no character and no point. I think this *Penguin Book of Women Poets* is one of them. Is it about anything? Is it made of anything, except a few asseverations and a great many words?

It pretends to be full of poems all written by women. But let's see first where it comes from. Berkeley, California, the city, not the university; though it has some natal connection with 'work on women poets which began' – ah – 'in association with the Department of Comparative Literature'. It is edited by three teaching women, who have consulted with three consulting – they mean consultative – editors, three more women about whose otherwise special gifts we are not informed; and it is, I repeat, and I shall justify this in a minute, smooth or round or both, has no projections, and only a foolish character, and if a point or purpose, only a silly one; being filled, by any critical or discerning measure, almost with nothing at all (381 pages).

TURN OVER A NEW LEAF

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The desire of the editors is 'to represent', in the female line, 'as many literatures as possible'. I wouldn't stop to ask how you represent literatures, but shall go on to quote that the editors 'have tried to illuminate the additional context of sexual identity as it may affect the poetry of women across the lines of time and culture' (all their preface is written in that kind of pedagogical kitsch-kit).

What then is the next to nothing which fills most of this elusive object? We discern that after all it isn't poems mostly , but translations of poems – of poems by ancient Egyptians, ancient Jews, ancient Greeks, ancient Japanese and Chinese and Irish and Welsh and French and Spaniards, and Arabs and Indians; and of less and less ancient poems from all the way round the globe and down to the living. Being an old hand and sceptical, I see just how this *Book of Women Poets* is going to be reviewed (and by which women reviewers); as a miraculous and lucid revelation of how women have written poems, in spite of the handicaps of not being male.

Goodness! Did you know about Sulpicia, in Rome, in 20 BC, or Mihri Hatun in Turkey, who died in 1506? Or Ho Nansohon in 16th-century Korea? Or Owl Woman among the Papago Indians, writing neck and neck with Christina Rossetti? Or about women's songs among the nomadic Pashtoons of Afghanistan? Or about Máiri Mhac an tSaoi, who was born four years before Elizabeth Jennings, and is writing away round the corner in Ireland? You didn't? You ignorant traitorous unsexed woman, you insufferable male squirt, you neither-one-sex-nor-the-other. So to each of these and to all the other names is attached a very little life-note, and a few little translations.

I am not in the least making fun of women poets. Who denies that they have had to write, if at all, within the click of spinning wheels, and against the screams of children, and against masculine contempt, and out of sight, like Christina Rossetti writing on the corner of her washstand? Who denies that a woman's love poem about a man – say a poem by Marceline Desbordes-Valmore about losing one of her lovers – may be distinguishable in some gender differences from a man's love poem? Not me, though such facts are of rather small interest. No, I am not in the least making fun of Sulpicia or Mihri Hatun or Ho Nansohon or Ho Xuan Huong or Owl Woman or the female songsters among the nomadic Pashtoons or Máiri Mhac an tSaoi. I did know something about Sulpicia, but that was all. About the others in that random pick I did not know a thing, and I still know next to nothing about them – except (which is certainly wrong) that they all have written in a way which is identically insipid – according to the translations.

> At one glance
> I loved you
> With a thousand hearts,

Mihri Hatun is made to say in neo-translatese.

> How shall I begin my song
> In the blue night that is settling?
> I will sit and begin my song,

continues Owl Woman in the same sub-lingo which is common (damnation, how common) both to the Pashtoon women –

> Please let my hair grow, mother.
> Don't cut it

and –

> Do not rely on me, poor wretch!
> In your own quality at least you existed,
> however sordidly –

to Máiri Mhac an tSaoi neo-translating her own Irish.

It is that contemporary idiom of translation which makes it so worth stamping on this jellyfish job; and on our dull heresy, our naïve and it now seems nearly universal fancy, that translations of this kind transmit anything of the substance and nature of poems, those artifacts of the unique.

Where did this neo-translatese begin? I suppose, and I have argued it before, with Arthur Waley, and Ezra Pound – Pound's *Cathay* in 1915 and Waley's *A Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems* in 1918 – and with imagism, the postulates of which were so feebly pursued, and insulted, by those who laid them down. Since Waley made all the Chinese poets who attracted him, and whom we were keen to know about, seem to be one poet, regardless of style, subject or century, and for that was accorded a poet's name which his smooth tasteful English never justified, English neo-translatese has spread, in parallel with English neo-namby-pamby –

> Now he pumps his little wits,
> Shitting writes, and writing shits,
> All by little tiny bits –

across continents, into suburbs and high-rise slums of the mind, and into departments of English.

Are these three (or six) editors, in the end, celebrating the *good* poems women have written, against odds? Not at all – as I can prove. These editors insert, naturally, poems written in English by English women and American women (also one Australian woman, and one Canadian woman). If some are good, in its durable meaning, others are limp, or gibberish, or cliché, or inept in other ways. Some, of our time, are written in our own Anglo-American neo-namby-pamby.

Why hoover the cobwebs from Aphra Behn or the Matchless Orianda? Or Anne Bradstreet? Why fit Elizabeth I with four items she probably never wrote, and which are anyhow below Pam Ayres? Why? Because the ticket into this book is that every contributor wasn't male. Just that. On the same principle of a now standard conceit and a standard indifference to the arts and their nature – and their difficulty – why should other Californian editors, if they can be found, not produce a Book of Consumptive Poets, a Book of Stunted Poets, a Book of Ennobled Poets who had Club Feet?

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Morris Fraser

Keep the Aspidistra Talking

Psychobabble by R. D. ROSEN *Wildwood House* £5.95

Reading R. D. Rosen's book puts me straight into doing my own thing, into my space; I am aware, in touch with my feelings, I can communicate. Soon, maybe, I may learn where I'm at, though I may never be altogether together – at least, not in the here and now.

The psychobabblers have us in thrall. R. D. Rosen's fascinating and witty book is above all about human gullibility, about the fast-talking mini-messiahs of the new psychotherapeutic faiths and the disciples of the New Communication, the psychobabble. The title was conceived some years ago when, as a gentle prank, Rosen and another journalist invented a patently ludicrous cult called Sansuki; adherents, guided by the 'head lettuce', sought for a kind of vegetable consciousness, some curled up as infant tomatoes (though apparently fighting broke out among the cabbages). To their dismay the pseudo-cult was taken quite seriously by readers and colleagues, and a number of sober inquiries about Sansuki arrived at the newspaper's head office. Alarmed by what appeared to be a ripening public credulity about psychological pursuits, Rosen set out to examine a few of the prevailing cults of the Seventies and the ways in which the language has been infiltrated and subverted by them.

First we are invited to marvel at the gusty optimism of David Viscott (Sensitivity Inc.) whose books, he tells us, will be on the shelves years after all the others have been forgotten. Perhaps, though, they will. One contains a two-page chapter entitled 'Everything you always Wanted to Know about Winning at Sex'. Then to the upbeat psychology of Est (Erhard Seminars Training). Or alternatively: what is, is. Or again: what ain't, ain't. There is a marvellously penetrating account of an Est seminar, a glimpse of Erhard in full flight, and echoes of the weighty banalities that now ring through the conference halls of three continents in the name of Participation, Awareness, and It. But, says Est's founder,

> . . . once you get It you've got to prove you've got It. But proving you've got It means you haven't got It. So the only thing to do once you've got It is to give It up.

This, writes Rosen admiringly, is *high* psychobabble.

Then to Co-Counselling, a faintly mysterious pilgrimage *à deux* into 'love, optimism, co-operation and enthusiasm' and other equally novel conceptions. Or just Feeling. The principle is appreciation. Enough of it, enough 'discharging' and away go those distress patterns, leaving the 'inherent natural human being'. And, says a co-counsellor, it's cheap. 'It costs less than a movie and it's more interesting.'

Well, perhaps Co-Counselling does provide a morsel of comfort for the lonely or disappointed, but can we really take 'Computer Therapy' seriously? Rosen consulted a computer once; his obscure but distressing complaint was that when in an Italian restaurant, which was frequently, he was never able to decide between fettuccini or clams casino and became in consequence highly agitated. The transcript of the interview, which he includes, is one of the high points of the book. True, I have once or twice heard a 'real' psychiatrist take a less rational history – but then his stock of responses to key words was probably even less than the computer's random or rotating six. Not so, however, with the computer known as PARRY which does not, as one might expect, compose Welsh hymns but – even worse – simulates paranoia with the purpose of treating paranoid patients. We are told, in fact, that it could treat hundreds at a time with time-sharing and the appropriate number of terminals. Breathtakingly, the advantages claimed for the computer-doctors is that they are non-directive, infinitely patient, that they *don't* pretend to understand, *don't* make moral judgments, and are never out. I am sure that precisely the same considerations led an old lady of my acquaintance to confide in her aspidistra; they put her away.

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(whence come all Specific Negatives) and encounter Infinite Intelligence. Leonard Orr, the founder of Re-Birthing, does concede that this could take several sessions. Finally to Primal Therapy, which is based on a kind of abreactive dislodgment of guilt and Repressed Pain, either by screaming or other physical acting-out, to produce totally neurosis-free graduates, akin to the 'clears' of Scientology. Woven into this absorbing series of chapters is the story of Ron and Laura Carver, whose discipleship led them into endless misery, horror, and finally death. It is fair to say, of course, that all the 'traditional' therapies have their equally spectacular failures, and that one case proves nothing. In fact, the Carvers' distress was certainly less measurable than the claim of the man who, under Primal Therapy, developed a larger penis.

Rosen's book is a highly entertaining read, but in the end he makes some sober points; others, more disquieting still, occur to me. First – hard though it may be to credit – the students, seminarists and graduates of the new cults are all in deadly earnest. And this can only point to an immensity of human neurosis, misery and disappointment thus far untouched by the older 'helping professions' like the Church and traditional psychiatry – so that it hardly becomes this reviewer, for one, to join too heartily in Rosen's mirth.

Again, it is possible to discern two common strands in the cults, both as old as philosophy itself. First, the cathartic or 'hydraulic' view of emotion – the belief that unpleasant and negative feelings can simply be drained off, exposing the 'loving, co-operative, perfect human being' that exists underneath. The way in which this psychic laxative is administered varies widely, but the principle remains identical. Then there is the old *argumentum ad hominem*; any logical objection to a theory is attributed, as it was by Freud, to 'resistance' on the part of the individual to a perceived truth about himself. The greater the truth, the greater the resistance. Instead of resistance, it's now 'Blocking Pain' or 'distress patterns'. So the guru is always right.

But the real danger of the new therapeutic cults lies, it seems to me, in their tendency to promote total self-absorption, and this is summed up to perfection in the Est 'hunger plan', though Rosen does not mention it. The plan is that each Estonian should miss one meal a week. Just that. Not send money, not do anything but miss the meal – so increasing his 'awareness' of the hunger in the world. Not only Est, but all the new faiths abide by the comfortable precept that you can't help others till you help yourself; it sounds good, but the trouble is that the self-helping goes on for ever, or until the cult dies. I *have* heard the precept reversed – but not, unhappily, for some time.

Richard Boston

He

H. Rider Haggard: A Voice from the Infinite
by PETER BERRESFORD ELLIS *Routledge* £7.95

What did people do in the olden days, before television? For those of us in rural areas evening entertainment consisted either of the radio – or wireless, as we called it – or the reading of books. Apparently boys no longer read books, but in my day we consumed them by the shelfload, whether they were by Captain W. E. Johns or P. C. Wren, Dornford Yates or Sapper, John Buchan or Conan Doyle or Rafael Sabatini. But there was one writer who stood head and shoulders above that crowd of giants. Was it, as Toad might have asked, the King or Kitchener? No, it was Henry Rider Haggard.

In my maturer years I am now prepared to concede, however reluctantly, that English literature does contain even greater writers than Haggard. Among his contemporaries alone, he was no Conrad or Hardy or Henry James. Yet he was more readable than any of them, and his readability is a quality that does not seem to have diminished with time. I would not pretend that *King Solomon's Mines*, for example, is a work of art of the order of, say, *The Ambassadors*. On the other hand, I doubt if I am the only person who has read *The Ambassadors* once and once only; and that whether or not I die a happy man does not depend on whether I read it again. On the other hand, I have read *King Solomon's Mines* more times than I can possibly calculate, and I hope that I will continue to find time to re-read it every ten years or so for the rest of my allotted span, perhaps alternating it with *She* or *Allan Quartermain*.

The claims to be made for Rider Haggard may be absurd but they are no less real for that. There are far greater writers who never created a figure half so vivid as Umslopogaas, the mighty wielder of the axe Inkosikaas. And though Henry James was indisputably a finer literary craftsman, did he ever write anything as memorable as that great passage which ends (and I quote from memory), '"Run for your lives," I shouted in Arabic'?

Peter Berresford Ellis's biography contrives to make Haggard appear amazingly dull considering what a vigorous life he (Haggard) had led. He was one of the ten children of a Norfolk squire, and only narrowly escaped being christened Sylvanus. At the age of 19 he went to Africa, and was soon in the thick of things, attacking and being attacked by Zulus, Boers or fierce animals. There was also a not very successful spell of ostrich farming. Apart from this period, his life was mostly that of an English landed gent; he travelled widely and wrote at a cracking pace – not just 54 novels but ten works of non-fiction as well – going everywhere from Iceland to the Antipodes. This left plenty of time for such activities as being Vice-President of the Council for Public Morals, President of the Hastings and District Boy Scouts' Association, President of the Vegetable, Fur and Feather Society (the *what?*) and serving on endless committees and commissions that looked into all sorts of things and wrote colossal reports that no one took any notice of.

How, then, was he different from so many of his immensely industrious contemporaries? Apart from the fact that his books sold – and continue to be read – in far greater numbers than theirs, Rider Haggard differs in two outstanding regards. At first blush he was a dyed-in-the-wool empire-builder with a quasi-religious belief in English superiority.

This English

It's the singer as well as the song: a 'This English' solecism often gains point from the celebrity of its perpetrator. Here are four nob's pronouns from unlikely, or relatively unlikely, sources. We wind up with a popular near-homophone. My colleague, Julian Barnes, made the same slip in his column a couple of weeks ago, while mounting an attack on linguistic pedantry. Perhaps there were militating circumstances. £3 for the first entry, £2 for the others printed.

☐ We need to ask ourselves whether the young are learning the worst lessons from we who are older when we fall short in our personal lives and conduct of the highest standard. **James Callaghan** quoted in the *Daily Telegraph* (John T. Hart)

☐ . . . so let Colville and he both now belt up and let Mary Soames get on with finishing her eagerly awaited biography of her mother. **Alastair Forbes** *The Times* (Alastair Forbes)

☐ More and more he came to see Wilson as a small-minded politician, obsessed with press leaks and conspiracies, suspicious of any minister whom he thought was getting uppity . . . **Noel Annan** *New York Review of Books* (E. Klingsberg)

☐ The precious, costly fripperies on Harrods' underwear counter must do roaring business among transvestites, whom I trust wear it in good health. **Angela Carter** *Cosmopolitan* (Emma Dally)

☐ One factor which will mitigate against the effect of the IMF repayment . . . **Alex Brummer** *Guardian* (G. Jay)

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'Do you understand,' he asked at the beginning of World War I, 'that if Germany and her allies become masters of England they will become masters of the world: and that in two or three years there will be no British Empire?' Why the disappearance of the organisation which – as Haggard well knew – had just invented the concentration-camp should be such a bad thing is not at this point in history immediately clear. Out of a very small population some 20,000 Boers died in the camps of disease and starvation.

Where Haggard differed was that he did not believe that the British Empire would (even if it should) last for ever. As the novels repeatedly emphasise, empires fall as well as rise. Nor did he think the Victorian gentleman was necessarily the very best that creation could come up with. As Allan Quartermain says in *Child of Storm*:

> We white people think we know everything; for instance, we think we understand human nature. And we do, as human nature appears to us, with all its trappings and accessories seen through the glass of our conventions, leaving out those aspects of it which we have forgotten or do not think positive to mention.

It is attitudes of that kind – and his unusual respect for Africa and the Africans – that distinguished Haggard from the mass of his contemporaries. How many white men, English or Boer, could have written as Haggard did in 1881, '. . .every day that has elapsed since I wrote has only strengthened my conviction that we can look for no peace or security in South Africa'?

Derek Mahon

Only Humane

Literature in Society: Essays and Opinions: II, 1931-1978 by EDGELL RICKWORD *Carcanet* £6.90

The name Edgell Rickword is vaguely familiar to most people who take an interest in modern English poetry. Rickword is thought to have been one of those political poets of the 1930s; but what became of him thereafter is anybody's guess. He *was*, in fact, one of those political poets, though more committed than they (my information is that he is still a member of the Communist Party). He never belonged to the Auden group. He was a bit older than them, for a start – old enough to have served in the trenches during the first world war – and his first book of poems came out as long ago as 1921. He published two further books of verse (the collected poems are available from Carcanet), but from the late 1920s he devoted his attention to literary journalism, mainly for the radical press. His interests, as evidenced by the topics discussed in the present volume (the second of two), include the English radical tradition in all its manifestations, French literature (he has published a study of Rimbaud), and modern English poetry, including the poetry of both world wars.

Why has his work been so long neglected, as it undoubtedly has? There are, I think, two reasons, and they are not unconnected. First, there is the urbane occlusion by vested interests of any 'politically motivated' author sufficiently single-minded to be tiresome; and secondly there is the unfortunate fact that politically motivated poetry, as such, is seldom very good: 'To the Wife of Any Non-Intervention Statesman', reprinted here from a 1938 broadsheet, is best passed over in silence. Rickword has always insisted on a poetry growing directly out of the 'class struggle', when everybody knows, or else should know, that poetry has, or should have, nothing to do with 'class'; it transcends such nugatory considerations. Real poetry, despite the prevailing orthodoxy, is about myth, or some derivative of myth. Robert Graves, who is for it, is a real poet; and Philip Larkin, who thinks he is against it, is a real poet too, at his best, as in 'Water' and 'Sad Steps'. But for Rickword 'myth' is a term of abuse, synonymous with 'fallacy' or 'opiate'. He is clearly a humane and decent man, and one who has fought the good fight with all his might; but he is also rather literal-minded. His province is that of 'the flat ephemeral pamphlet and the boring meeting'; but unlike, say, his contemporary Hugh MacDiarmid, who also devoted a great deal of energy to pamphlets and meetings, he is a bit of a plodder. His prose, moreover, is sometimes clumsy and confusing.

Still, there is enough interesting material here to justify its collection and publication in book form. Rickword is excellent on the genteel deodorisation of Swift which has continued almost into our own day; on the 'metaphysical elopement' of Verlaine and Rimbaud; on the half-keen, half-scared revolutionary fervour of the young Auden and Spender; and on Malraux, whom he compares and contrasts most absorbingly with T. E. Lawrence. Did you know that Verlaine wrote one poem in English, at the station bar in Calais? Here are the last three lines:

> I start tomorrow to London
> For your sake, and then, suddenly,
> That sadness, so heavy falls down.

It does indeed. Intriguing information like this abounds, and few of the essays are entirely devoid of interest. He is at his best, however, on 'English Radicals' (Milton, Cobbett, the young Wordsworth, Hazlitt), and is something of an authority on William Hone and George Cruikshank. But the finest thing in the book is 'War Poetry: 1914-18', which originally appeared in the August 1940 issue of *Life and Letters Today*.

A trench veteran himself, Edgell Rickword writes with feeling and vivid remembrance of first-hand experience, tracing the development of 'war poetry' from the naïve enthusiasm of Brooke to Rosenberg's sardonic and moving 'Break of Day in the Trenches' – Jean Renoir's *La Grande Illusion* in a few lines. The disparity of attitude between combatants and non-combatants, and the gradual, courageous fumbling towards a poetry that would make explicit the actual awfulness of the war, are chronicled almost month by month; and, while acknowledging the unsurpassed artistry of Owen in this respect, Rickword's essay is remarkable for its documentary reliance on lesser and now almost forgotten figures like Julian Grenfell, C.H. Sorley and Robert Nichols. His library of war poetry is clearly a comprehensive one: why has he not given us his own book on the subject? Even today, a vestigial sort of shire-

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patriotism vitiates the most authoritative work in this field.

Not that Rickword is unpatriotic. As with all true internationalists, he is profoundly of his own country. He does not by any means reject the English literary and artistic traditions. Like Blake (and it would be interesting to read him on Blake), he seeks to modify and expand them in accordance with his vision of what England should be. This is in itself a long and honourable English tradition, and one to which Rickword's contribution may in time appear rather more considerable than it does at present.

Blake Morrison

Looking Backwards

Young Adolf by BERYL BAINBRIDGE *Duckworth* £3.95
The Clique by FERDINAND MOUNT *Chatto* £4.95
The Bookshop by PENELOPE FITZGERALD *Duckworth* £3.95
Cities of the Interior by ANAIS NIN *Peter Owen* £7.95

What was Hitler doing in 1912? We're not sure, but there's evidence that he spent at least part of that year with his half-brother, Alois, in Liverpool. For Beryl Bainbridge, who was born in Liverpool, and who has made it the capital of her fictional world, the discovery of that evidence must have seemed a perfect opportunity to attempt a *Ragtime*-like merging of the fictional and real. Why not let Adolf and Alois mingle with characters who, if not entirely made-up (the author has done her homework, and many of the details are carefully researched), have all the appearance of Bainbridgean types – oddball exiles like Meyer, for example, or sad, fat Mary O'Leary, abandoned by her husband for being too 'old and hairy'. No reason at all why not. And yet *Young Adolf* is less of a success than its fascinating origins might have led us to suppose.

It begins promisingly enough, with young Adolf, a 'struggling artist', arriving at Lime Street Station, and promptly being knocked over by a luggage-trolley: he is to be, we quickly realise, more comic blunderer than budding psychopath. Not even Alois's divulgence of plans to build an 'empire' in the razor-blade business (the historical reverberations are nicely suggestive) can stir Adolf's imagination. Much of his time he spends lying on Alois's sofa, rousing himself only for conversations with Meyer. Eventually, accused by Alois of 'sponging', he is pushed into a job at the Adelphi Hotel, and feels to be 'in his element'. But some imprudent assistance to a small-time crook soon puts a stop to that; five months after his arrival he leaves England ('this lunatic island', as he calls it) with the warning shout: *'in Zukunft werde ich es dir zurückerstatten.'*

It's Beryl Bainbridge, however, who does most of the paying back here: by forcing Adolf to suffer various Chaplinesque indignities, she works a kind of comic historical revenge. In the course of the novel, Adolf is knocked over the head, bitten by fleas, drenched to the skin, dressed up in women's clothes. The slapstick purges old resentments, and largely frees Bainbridge from the task of 'explaining' Hitler psychologically. It must have been tempting to indulge in the ironies of hindsight, but in this respect the novel is aptly restrained: only as Adolf finally departs is a character allowed to observe: 'Such a strong-willed young man. It is a pity he will never amount to anything.'

For all that, *Young Adolf* is a disappointment – a brilliant idea, but one too sketchily (and perhaps too hastily) carried out. Bainbridge is good, as we'd expect, on Liverpool (the ferries, the trams, the houses, the ragged children), but remains a novelist more at home with the 1940s (and the present) than with 1912. Not only are many of the usual narrative tensions absent, but Bainbridge can't quite prevent herself from getting Adolf on the analyst's couch (persecution mania, fits, hallucinations, anti-Semitism and all). And when she does 'analyse' – 'School had been rotten, and his father, and Linz and Vienna. Even his beloved mother had died rotten of a cancer. It was a rotten world' – the results can look disconcertingly vapid.

Subtitled 'A Novel of the Sixties', Ferdinand Mount's *The Clique* is actually cynical and late-Seventies in outlook: like quite a few recent novels, it offers a second-wave view of the Sixties not as buoyant, youthful, 'a beginning', but as run-down, decadent, 'the end'. Mount does the obvious satirical things well, using witty metaphors to send up the decade's fashions and furnishings: 'Hanging askew from a nail on the wall was a stringed instrument which looked like a long-stalked onion sliced in half.' Often the metaphors subtly reinforce Mount's view of Sixties England as a post-imperial twilight. It's not only the dossers in the street who seem doped on the past; so are the trendy young:

> They were drinking coffee from a brass cobra, another fragment of the detritus of empire . . . The two girls sat hunched in shawls like poor women in photographs of the Great Depression. They were reading tattered back numbers of the *Radio Times*.

Gunby Goater, the novel's journalist-hero, stands at one remove from the decadence. A frustrated, Jim Dixon-like provincial, Gunn is sent down to London to cover the death of 'the Last Great Englishman'. He wants to like the Sixties, and moves in with 'the Clique', a group of young people who, even in their names (Antic Hay, the Happening Man, Poppy), seem to epitomise the *zeitgeist*. But when things don't work out in his relationship with one of the Clique, Lil, Gunn's disillusion grows as quickly as his waistline. In London, and later in America, Gunn fights a private war on the Clique, announcing after one particularly violent outburst: 'This is the asshole of the universe . . . and I am cleaning it out.'

It's only as he works towards a positive ending that Mount's satire softens up. The salvation of the hero in rural England (he marries a vicar's daughter and becomes a cricket correspondent) is a little too cosy, the effort to restore Orwellian decency too predictable. Though it talks of 'a brave start to the Seventies', *The Clique* ends by harking back.

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Another backward glance can be found in Penelope Fitzgerald's *The Bookshop*, set in Suffolk in 1959. The date is important, for in that year *Lolita* appeared in England: the 250 copies in Florence Green's new bookshop sell like hot cakes, but further distress the influential locals opposed to her venture. It's only a matter of time before she gets the chop. The rise and fall of a country bookshop makes pretty thin material for a novel, even if (as here) that shop is fortunate enough to be haunted by 'rappers' (poltergeists) and to have a splendidly precocious 11-year-old helping behind the counter. Worse, we are by the end being expected to supply a sentimental response to Florence's victimisation by the local bigwigs. But initially the author's sharp insights make for a refreshingly disenchanted view of life on the Laze.

For readers who find it hard to stay with Anais Nin's novels for more than several pages (no, let's be fair: for more than one page), the publication of her collected fiction isn't going to be the major event which Sharon Spencer's introduction would have us suppose. Nin herself described *Cities of the Interior* as 'an endless novel', and for anyone wading faithfully through 589 pages of such sub-Lawrentian wisdom as 'A breast touched for the first time is a breast never touched before' the description is going to sound all too appropriate. Still, somewhere within all the gushing are a few pleasantly erotic moments.

Phillip Knightley

On the Road

Point of Departure by JAMES CAMERON *Oriel Press* £8

The first journalist I ever admired was Sam White. He was a war correspondent for Frank (father of Kerry) Packer and I was a copy boy. Sam came back from the momentous events of 1939-45 wearing the first pair of suede desert boots ever seen in Australia, put them up on his desk and waited for a peacetime assignment. They sent him to Darlinghurst Court which dealt mainly with drunks and prostitutes. 'Jesus,' said Sam, 'this isn't journalism', and left, as I remember, the next day for Paris. The second was James Cameron, who has spent a lifetime searching for an answer to the question raised by Sam's statement. Journalism may not be about drunks and prostitutes, but what is it about? This book, re-issued ten years after its first publication, chronicles that search with humour, honesty, and a wry eye for the triviality of much of modern reporting.

From the make-believe world of *Wizard*, the *Hotspur*, *Weekly Welcome*, the *Red Letter*, and *Red Star Weekly*, in the Dundee offices of Thomson publications, the young Cameron rose to be foreign correspondent for the *Daily Express*, *Picture Post*, and the *News Chronicle*. He was at his peak in that era when nothing could happen anywhere in the world until Fleet Street arrived. He saw the atom bomb explode over Bikini, the UN forces land at Inchon, the Americans bomb Hanoi. He met, among others, Ho Chi Minh, the Dalai Lama, Albert Schweitzer, Onassis, Churchill, and Bertrand Russell. He went to India, China and South America. He flew to Siam, Burma and Indonesia. He trekked into Tibet, Afghanistan and Patagonia. He went to war in Korea, Vietnam and the Middle East. He was expelled from Albania, North Vietnam and South Africa. 'I began to feel that my life was spent tethered to an inclinable seat beside a perspex window, peering without pleasure at the planet below.' All the while Cameron was trying to make sense of this whirl of experience, trying to condense what he had seen and heard into 1,500 crisp words that started somewhere, said something and reached some conclusion. I admired Cameron because he never pretended to be other than fallible, never tried to claim that he was the objective, emotionless, all-seeing eye, a witness to history who could not offer an opinion because he dealt only in facts.

I don't know if their paths ever crossed, but Cameron tackled his work like Herbert Matthews, of the *New York Times*: 'True journalism is not merely chronology, but the placing of an event into its proper category as a moral act and judging it as such.' Cameron was not the first British journalist to attempt this approach – William Russell did a fair bit of categorising of events in the Crimean war – but Cameron did it better than any of his contemporaries; he thought more about it, and he fought harder for his right to do so. He did not always win. Edward Hulton, owner of *Picture Post*, suppressed a report by Cameron and photographer Bert Hardy on South Korea's treatment of political prisoners. (Cameron did not resign, but has the frankness to admit that he should have, and that 'it would have been a little less inglorious' if he had done so.) And he did not make any money out of it. 'I remember thinking on my fiftieth birthday, with 30 years of work behind me and half a dozen books, that the clear possession of 500 pounds would have changed my life.'

He would not claim to have altered the course of history, or even the course of journalism, which he feels is going downhill. 'Today we journalists spend our time splashing in the shallows, reaching on occasions the rare heights of the applauded mediocre.' So what did it all add up to? Well, he travelled the world at someone else's expense, he met some interesting people, he made some fine friends, he experienced, vicariously, a few major historic events, and he reached one important conclusion. Having lived through two world wars, and having reported the lesser ones, having witnessed on countless occasions the misery that man inflicts on man, he decided: '*Nothing* in the world, however base, nor however good, nor however theoretically admirable, can justify murder as an act of policy.'

James Cameron agrees that this will be an unpersuasive argument in most societies, and adds that he is in no doubt that it is a point of view without political importance to anyone except himself. It is also hardly original. But the young Cameron in this book did not decide it, and if he had, he would not have written it. If a long career in journalism wrought this change, then can it be such a bad trade after all?

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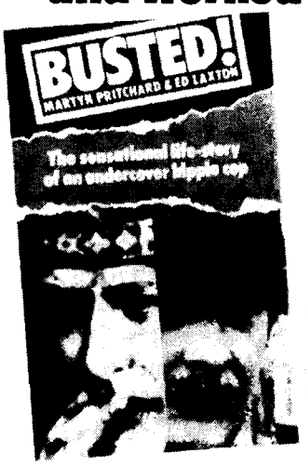

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Peter Conrad

Sitting Targets

Madam Butterfly *Welsh National Opera*
'La Fanciulla del West' *Deutsche Grammophon* £13.05
Così fan tutte *Covent Garden*

The idea which activates Joachim Herz's new *Butterfly* is of Pinkerton the shutter-bug. He appears during the prelude aiming his box Brownie at an eye of light which opens to disclose the hilltop house, itself a *camera oscura* of filtering screens. Butterfly's relatives pose for snaps after the wedding and, while Butterfly undresses, Pinkerton unharnesses his camera and hands it to Suzuki for safekeeping: without his technological prop he is as good as naked. After this disinvestiture the camera doesn't reappear, but the idea of photography determines the production.

Photography is a technological substitute for seeing and feeling. Posing the quaint locals in groups, patronising them through the lens, Pinkerton is relieved by the machine from the need to understand or accept responsibility for them. In obeisance to his vision of the characters, they are sepia-stained, reduced to the obsolete subjects of old photographs. Photography is also an implement of imperialism. Pinkerton arrives in Nagasaki on a warship. His camera, like the guns of the heavy cruiser, subdues the natives by making them obligingly static targets. The camera first colonises, then kills. Butterfly tells Pinkerton that she has heard of butterflies impaled on pins and filed away as entomological exhibits. Her own fate is to be glued into a photograph album. Savages fear the camera because it technologically magics away the soul, mortifying a person as an image. At the beginning of Herz's production, Pinkerton captures Nagasaki with his camera: at the end, his wife plunders Butterfly's child, absconding with a live souvenir.

But the camera is also a means of restitution. In Pinkerton's absence, it institutionalises memory and fantasy. Butterfly decorates the house with his portrait, snaps of American scenery, and an image of Theodore Roosevelt, of whose stick-shaking diplomacy Pinkerton and Sharpless are agents. As documentary evidence, photography arraigns Pinkerton. Herz writes a letter in his name to Sharpless, slangily discarding 'the sweet little gal I sort of married', and projects a photocopy of it on a screen as ocular proof of his perfidy.

Returning to the Milan version of the opera, Herz apologises for Puccini's sentimentality by edging it into cynicism. The additions Puccini made at Brescia lyrically exonerate Pinkerton. The interpolated aria 'Addio fiorito asil' marks him as a sensual vagrant who in miserably repining earns the ultimate operatic redemption of a good tune and a high note. Depriving Pinkerton of this lyrical extenuation, Herz sends him off, shabbily appeasing his conscience with a bribe. Though Herz is too zealous in his administration of alienatory shocks, he at least understands that the problem of Puccini is the dangerous proximity of sentimentality and cynicism, the masochist's endurance of pain and the sadist's enjoyment of it. Puccini is the demonic opposite of Bogart's pock-marked marshmallow in *Casablanca*: a sentimentalist with a Neronic cynic inside. A sickly psychological compact joins those who glory in the infliction of agony (Scarpia, Rance, Turandot) and those they rack into spasms of lyrical excruciation (Cavaradossi in the torture-chamber, Johnson with the lynch-mob, the suicidal Liu).

Puccini's perversity is inflamed by the embarrassment of operatic realism. If operatic action is to be realistic, how do you justify the singing? Puccini's solution is a relentless intensification of emotional and physical stress. Verdi's characters sing as naturally as if they were talking, but Puccini's can only be provoked from realistic chatter into lyrical assertion by terror, lust, anguish or loathing. Puccini makes frail characters like Butterfly tragic by hurting them into song. Lyricism is gratuitous, so it has to be produced under emotional duress. In Covent Garden's production of Puccini's next opera, *La Fanciulla del West*, Johnson's final aria is kicked and punched out of him.

Herz prefers the original *Butterfly* because of its abrasive controversion of music by drama. Where the revised Butterfly talks of praying with Pinkerton, in the original she begs pardon for having been so expensive and promises to live frugally. *La Fanciulla del West* insists even more cruelly on this contradiction. The drama defames and diminishes the characters; the music rescues and deifies them. Realism here is heroism travestied. *Fanciulla* is wild-west Wagner, with Minnie as a gun-toting rather than spear-wielding Brünnhilde. Puccini quotes *Die Walküre* when the cabin door is banged open by the blizzard, and the Californian redwoods (as the prelude to Act Three suggests) grow in Siegfried's forest.

Demoralised by Puccini's *verismo*, the characters are constantly declaring themselves unqualified for opera. Puccini's other subjects are celebrities: the Florentine factotum Gianni Schicchi, the opera singer Tosca, Turandot who lures victims from all over the world. But the characters of *Fanciulla* are nonentities. Johnson for a time doesn't even have a name, and is dismissively referred to as the 'signor di Sacramento'. He has no idea, he tells Minnie, who he really is. She in turn nullifies herself, saying she is 'oscura e buona e nulla'. Their conviction of anonymity and inadequacy is enforced by the reductive vituperation of Rance the sheriff, who wants to make Minnie (as he says) into Mrs Rance and Johnson into the bandit Ramerezz. Humiliated by the drama, Minnie autodidactically struggles to redeem herself and the miners by reading books, conducting Bible classes, hustling Wowkle into marriage. In her explication of the psalm, she argues that there is no sinner who can't be saved. The redemption she longs for is not only spiritual but operatic: the soul's reclamation is the voice's ascent. The sudden, vertiginous high notes of her part are leaps towards a heroic musical altitude from which the drama is forever pulling her down. One of these vocal climaxes ('Oh, se sapeste') actually describes a desperate levitation, reaching into the sky from the Sierras. Minnie operatically redeems Johnson – makes him worthy of opera, that is – by her gestures of faith in him, raising him from an outlaw to a cursed soul she pardons. He redeems her by declaring her to be an angel. Their spiritual escape from the intimidation of *verismo* is aped by Rance, who redeems himself (as Nick says) by losing the card game like a gent. What the characters do for one another, DGG has done for this neglected work in its exciting recording. Carol Neblett is a valiant Minnie, Placido Domingo a searing Johnson, and Zubin Mehta conducts with explosive swagger.

Covent Garden's Mozart productions are like airport VIP lounges, bland habitats for convoys of transient stars. The current *Così fan tutte* packages Margaret Price's superb Fiordiligi. She acts the character (if she is acting) as a greedy, bossy fat girl: gorging cakes, tearing up playing-cards, ordering Dorabella from the room, slapping Ferrando's truant hand. When yielding to erotic temptation, she scowls in ill-tempered boredom. But the voice which swells from this imperious dumpling of a woman is astounding, her attack frightening in its boldness. Agnes Baltsa is a beautifully nervous Dorabella, a martyr to the whims of her big sister. Daniela Mazzucato's Despina is a mincing manual of Italian gesture. As Alfonso, Donald Gramm is a solemn schoolmaster, not the usual sardonic viper. The production, having despaired of analysing character, contents itself with animating the props: showers of sequins, blitzes of fluttering hankies, legal documents, wreathed into streamers, even (by misadventure) a pair of unstuck moustaches. The singing, however, excuses these fatuities.

Television

Ian Hamilton

The Works

'I'll be talking about this in a later programme,' 'This is so important that I'll be devoting a whole programme to it later on', 'I'll go into this when I perform a post mortem in the last programme in the series': the first part of Jonathan Miller's *The Body in Question* (BBC-2) was peppered with half-a-dozen such parentheses and the (reasonable) message seemed to be that we should not be put off by any prefatory jauntiness or superficiality – the truly meaty stuff would be arriving later on. 'All of us contain an internal world just as complicated as the one we live in.' This being so, it will certainly take all of 13 weeks to do justice to the topic – 14, maybe, but we'll see.

In the meantime, if it's meat you're after, there was enough of it in this first show to get you going. Indeed, in one revolting sequence, there was a table-load of the stuff – lungs,

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liver, kidneys, spleen, the works, or most of them. Miller had done some *That's Life*-style street interviews in which he'd asked people how big their livers were, exactly where they thought they kept their kidneys, and so on. The results indicated blanket ignorance, and in some cases a rather attractive lack of interest: one cheerful fellow believed that if his kidneys got diseased he'd probably 'explode'. Hence the instructive table-load of plump and juicy organs. Miller's genial pride in his display was more that of a well-stocked butcher than a probing scientist and his blunt way with the scissors and the knife will have made many a sick viewer grateful for *Beyond the Fringe*: 'Sorry about this rather messy dissection. It's years since I did this.'

A plodding schoolroom expertise is not, though, what we should be looking for. This is to be Dr Miller's quirky show, and its success will depend on how the fans respond to his – shall we say – distinctive manner. Miller is not a natural teacher: he is too entranced by the difficulty of communication ever to lapse into any straightforward mode of getting even straightforward stuff across. The ever-active hands, the head-scratchings, the excruciated pauses – each of these registers how awfully *hard* it is to say anything that might not have been said differently; we are invited to prize what we are being told because there is no hint of glibness in its telling. Similarly, the facial expression; most characteristically, this attempts a likeable distillation of two warring impulses: on the one hand, a real concern (there is even a fond twinkle of compassion) for how little we – the students – *know*, a hint sometimes of boyish embarrassment that he by some accident knows more; on the other, the anguish of attempting to enlighten us without in any way vulgarising the subtle and perhaps mistaken notions he's enthused by. How to be true both to a faulty audience and to fallible ideas? And then, in any case, there's the stodginess of language, its frequent unreadiness for what one knows, or thinks today one knows, one wants to say. It would be a remarkable body that didn't twitch a bit beneath this load.

It is perhaps a nervousness about the (albeit doomed) ambitions of The Script that has encouraged an almost nursery-style condescension in the treatment of The Visuals. In this first episode, we are shown fossils from Pompeii (plus shots of present-day tourists – 'we can't be tourists in our own insides'), a bladder filling up with dyed pee ('like sandstorms erupting on the surface of Mars') and – in order to illustrate a supposed French obsession with the liver – many shots of Frogs guzzling to the strains of a Moulin Rouge accordion. None so hard to take, though, as Miller using a huge play-pen bead-counter in order to distinguish between the four factors (pain, threat to life, inconvenience, social stigma) that determine whether or not we pay a visit to the doctor, and, by that choice, 'submit to medical experts exactly as a novice submits to the rules of her order'.

That 'exactly' recalled a view put by a contentedly disgruntled chapel-father in *World in Action*'s brisk essay on the ills of Fleet Street (Granada), and notably of the Thomson sheet: 'The only place disputes don't exist is in a monastery or a graveyard.' All in all, a valiant attempt to encompass all the angles – no appearance, though, by the notoriously mysterious Duke Hussey, nor any direct argument between the two sides. The brief contributions of the *Mirror*'s Percy Roberts (who has installed 'the new technology' and been shrewd enough to buy machines that work and that don't wipe out the professional typesetter overnight) made one wish for another (exemplary) essay on just how he pulled it off.

If this *World in Action* seemed a bit cramped for proper coverage of essential detail, the opposite should be said about the 'Look Here' series treatment of *The Question of Violence on Television* (LWT), where maximum space was given to the expounding of utterly familiar points of view, and savage cutting was resorted to as soon as there was a hint of complication. The few words permitted to Christopher Ricks (and he wasn't being *that* complicated) tilted the proceedings towards a consideration of the possibility that non-evil humans might be capable of feeling two feelings at one go, but this was treated as a kind of telly-treason. I mean, if there are *two* feelings, that's got to mean a *confrontation*.

Julian Barnes is on holiday.

Sport

Russell Davies

Hard Nuts

Testing out my new despair about Rugby Union – after all, it may amount to nothing more than a fear that Wales are about to acquit themselves very badly against the All Blacks and others – I went along to Grange Road last Saturday and saw Cambridge University take a gentle hammering from London Scottish. Not much happened to change the prevailing mood. It was 40p. to get in. Kick-off was at 2.30, by which time it was already evening. A broad band of cloud put most of the match in a cellar-like gloom, but in the last quarter-hour the low sun re-emerged to throw a sinister orange glare on to the bottom rows of faces in the opposite stand. Leaves blew across the pitch. Isolated voices from among a respectable (in every sense) attendance crowed educatedly into the dusk. 'Come *on*, Varsiteigh!' 'Make something of this, Cambridge!' (Cambridge had flogged themselves up to the half-way line.)

There were even a few disgraceful cries of 'Oh *referee*!', for indeed the ref was not a dab hand with the advantage rule, and sent more than one likely-looking University move moping back for a useless scrum. Missing their tiny general John Robbie, and also Eddie Butler, a whopping Welsh number eight with a Desperate Dan chin (these two, looking like Asterix and Obelix, spent much of the afternoon signing wistful autographs in front of the main stand), the University started everything back on their heels; they managed to score only once, when their good elastic winger Tyler ran round the outside of a not over-interested bunch of covering defenders to score in the corner. Cambridge Univ. 4 pts., London Scottish 31 – a variety of overlapping and plunge-through tries, following passes that were longer and more powerful (more body swing) than those of the Young Gentlemen.

It was a surprise to me to note what an air of the 1950s a top-rank rugby side still has in the flesh. The plain navy socks of the London Scottish had a lot to do with it, I dare say, especially as the limbs of the average Scot have a peculiarly blanched and, from a distance, hairless and marbled surface. Shabby old off-white shorts did not help either, and several of the forwards seemed to be wearing old-fashioned high-ankle boots as well. But an equally strong reminder of the sporting past was the amount of visible unfitness rugby tolerates, and in certain positions actually encourages. Fitness of leg is essential, but the game's emphasis on weight leaves room for wide variations in anachronistic flab above thigh-level. Front-row forwards, close up, are in fact rather atrocious specimens, their only visible muscles being the ones that keep their knobbly, vengeful faces in order.

Barring accidents, of course. But rugby players seem resigned to those. The real 'amateur' quality of the game lies not in its unconnectedness with monetary rewards but in the willingness of its participants to get wrecked for no good reason. This is the rugby temperament: calculated recklessness, with a dash of masochism and a hankering for oblivion (which is found, if not on the field of play, then in the clubroom afterwards). Most people press on with their chosen game because they find they happen to have a chance of excelling at it; but in rugby this motivation seems to me insufficient. You have to be prepared to press on without your teeth, and with your features retreating gradually into a mass of protective healing tissue – something I was never prepared to do, little though I have to lose in the way of facial symmetry or delicacy of texture. The tap-tap-tap of the London Scottish substitute's metal studs, as he jogged up and down outside the Grange Road

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dressing rooms, ran a chill through most of my bodily organs, I must say.

In the event, only one threatening incident occurred on the pitch, when a Scottish forward attacked a ruck with that familiar high-stepping scrape of the boot, to the accompaniment of 'oh! Oh! Oh!' from the still jovial crowd. But in another game on the same afternoon, the former British Lions lock Chris Ralston was being stamped out of the game by an unnamed player from Llanelli. An artery was severed and Ralston emerged from hospital with 32 stitches in his head. It is scarcely possible to imagine what an outcry would result if an injury of this gravity occurred in – well, almost any other sport you can name. Apart from motor racing, which is not a sport at all but the ritual sacrifice of individuals to the survival of an industry; ski-ing, which at the top level is stunt-man stuff; and boxing, the worthwhileness of which is under serious review (this week the European Boxing Union reduced their Championship Bouts' distance from 15 rounds to 12), there is no game where horrible physical damage is regarded so philosophically as 'part of the set-up'.

Ralston himself commented to the *Daily Mail*, 'There is an unwritten law that you never tread on the head of a player in a ruck or maul situation', which (right down to the 'situation') is a typically fudgy expression of the game's unreasonable middle-class reasonableness. Anybody treading deliberately on another man's head should be liable to the kind of criminal prosecution – under 'written' law – he would face if he did the same thing in the street. Ralston regards his injury, apparently, as part of a contract he entered into freely by becoming a rugby player at all; he simply wants Llanelli to take their own disciplinary action. But he would be doing the game good if he, and the witnesses who saw him scalped, got as angry as they ought to be. There is too much brotherly hush-up in the game already. I well remember the *Observer*'s rugby correspondent, Christopher Wordsworth, telling me in what lividly shocked terms he reported a similar incident to Ralston's, in which a Welsh international had his top-class career effectively finished on the spot by one of these boot-on-face specialists. The whole passage was suppressed by the editorial staff, and something innocuous substituted about a brave man being led from the field with honourable wounds.

Obviously, certain purely mechanical controls can be brought in 'across the board' – severe limitations, for example, on the kind of footwear that the game's incorrigible tramplers can do their trampling in. But rugby's future as a 'hard man's' game strikes me as very uncertain. A society fixated on fantasy violence but horror-stricken by the spectacle itself will soon insist, I think, that ways be found of keeping the hooves of the victorious out of the faces of the fallen. And I am very much afraid that tomorrow's international will speed the process of reform on its way.

Andrew Motion

The Recovery

What her window shows tonight is the same
shelving field, beach, and grey uncanny sea
as ever. Only the confident way she looks

has changed, staring beyond the lamplight
to see why she must leave him at last.
He will be as he is – in that high bed

the hospital gave, inspecting his fleet
of immaculate ships in bottles across the wall.
Always the same deception: imagining stars

fixed between rigging and canvas, leading him
back to an absolute health. Once she confirmed
it all – the patience, the luck, the clear

astrological weather, but year by year felt
nothing return her faith. Now she has lost
even the gestures of hope, and turning away

in anger each night, tells him to sleep.
It is the one release he cannot prevent –
a chance of pleasing herself with her own

incorruptible silence, and learning again
how singular happiness is, how it will end
the lonely pretence of love where none remains.

Films

John Coleman

What's Up, Doctor?

Coma (AA) *Ritz; Classic, Oxford Street; ABC Fulham Road*
Black and White in Colour (A) *Studio, Oxford Street; Scene; from 12 November, Screen on the Green*
The Hound of the Baskervilles (A) *Studio, Oxford Street; Scene; selected release*
The 22nd London Film Festival *NFT, 15-30 November*

Michael Crichton, original author of *The Andromeda Strain* and writer and director of *Westworld*, is also a medical man. Judging by his track record up to and including *Coma*, which he has drawn from another doctor Robin Cook's best-selling novel, one imagines he specialises in transplants. The principal setting this time is the Boston Memorial Hospital, where delicious Dr Susan Wheeler (Genevieve Bujold), already upset by an in-out affair with ambitious Dr Mark Bellows (Michael Douglas), stumbles on a high incidence of post-operational coma and doggedly – discouraged in most quarters – sets out on a one-woman stretch of sleuthing which nearly brings about her own death, by George, before the big baddy is unmasked in the last reel. Rip Torn and Richard Widmark are among her superiors, Mr Douglas warns her not to rock the boat, and I have with fiendish ingenuity given you a half-clue (also contained in the film) as to the arch-villain's identity.

The perils of Susan take in the vertiginous ascent of a metal ladder from the hospital basement, some crawling between floors, a chase round the sinister, echoing Jefferson Institute, where tiers of comatose bodies hang from wires into the middle distance, all bathed in a purplish glow, and the removal of her perfectly healthy appendix (or maybe they just sewed her up again: I wouldn't swear to this). In short, the sidelights thrown on medical malpractice, and the ease with which it may be hushed up, encourage one to stay terribly fit or sling in one's lot with the Christian Scientists. The gimmick of this tolerable thriller is a highly organised traffic in human spare parts: 'left kidney, ready to ship, bidding now stands at 45,' intones a fellow breezily, gazing at a computerised TV screen. The occasion zips along, with pauses for one to admire the more macabre and/or expensive set-pieces. My favourite line belongs to a nurse gazing at poor Sue's belly-button on that operating table: 'Some are innies. Some are outies. Hers is an innie.' The trouble is that this refreshingly nursery burble, amid all the clinical verbal flak elsewhere emerging from behind masks, is presumably there to lower tension for a second before it builds again. And somehow there never *is* that much tension.

Black and White in Colour, a first feature by Jean-Jacques Annaud, won the American Academy Award for 'Best Foreign Film' of 1976 and set off some subsequent acrimony. One is not surprised, since it never seems to make its mind up as to what it's at. Dreamy French West Africa in 1915: a tiny, rather Pagnolian settlement of expatriates trades amiably with a nearby outpost of Imperial Germany. An old scrap of newspaper breaks the unwelcome news of war. Incompetent Sergeant Bosselet (Jean Carmet), one for the local black ladies, hunts for his Manual of Arms; a hectic and unreal chauvinism replaces the ambered harmony; Rechampot (Jacques Dufilho), his brother, their ladies and the rest go languidly off to watch their native troops confront the Germans' band. Their picnic or *partie de campagne* is rudely interrupted by the sound of firing – *'une mitrailleuse'*, someone gravely explains, airing the new word; then, a bleeding black or two staggers back, impaled on posts in pits. Unexpectedly, a hitherto gentle young geographer (Jacques Spiesser) takes over command, even resorting to torture to raise and train reluctant soldiery. This Hubert's transformation into ruthless man of action, with a flourished black mistress, is sudden and improbable: the intermittent new harshness of tone chimes oddly with the mostly broad humour otherwise prevailing. It is always charming to look at; there is some matter of a couple of missionaries bullying the natives into trading in wood carvings; the sweating blacks, humping the whites about on poled chairs, get their own back by singing such work-songs as 'My white man is fat as a bull and his feet stink' (subtitled for our benefit); their war ends with the arrival of a British detachment commanded – of course – by an Indian officer. 'The niggers who were German are now English.' All the targets – old colonialism, religious humbug, shopkeepers' greed, futility of war, cynical aftermath – are predictable. Only the odd sour-lyrical detail keeps a bemused interest alive.

Nothing can save *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. The Warhol man, Paul Morrissey, is known for his devotion to our 'Carry Ons': clearly, he has totally misread them. Peter Cook is a Jewish Sherlock Holmes, Dudley Moore a Welsh Watson. Dud does his one-legged hopping gag, which is always very funny; he also turns up as Holmes's non-sequential mother, which is quite funny. The cast numbers some of my best-beloved comic thespians. I'll type that again. The cast numbs

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some of my . . . *The Hound* is a dog.

This year's LFF has been cut down from 21 to 16 days and is operating on a very tight budget. It is surely time that enlightened sponsorship came to the aid of this useful and sometimes prestigious annual event. Now for the good news. With films by Altman, Welles, Oshima, Wajda, Losey and Frederick Wiseman, to name only 'names', the festival promises well. Ingmar Bergman's *Autumn Sonata* will surely be getting a wider screening soon, but I can report that it enshrines stand-out performances by Liv Ullmann and *Ingrid* Bergman. Of the few other entries one has so far had a chance to see, Jack Gold's *The Sailor's Return* has a peculiarly lingering appeal, a little reminiscent of the Truffaut of *Adèle H*; Larry Cohen's *The Private Files of J. Edgar Hoover* is both wild pastiche (harking back to *The FBI Story*) and compelling simplification, with Broderick Crawford splendid as the ambiguous 'top cop'; the third part of Bill Douglas's trilogy, *My Way Home*, is a triumphant conclusion to this uncompromising resurrection of a bleak Scottish upbringing. More later, but *please* note: it's a myth that every seat is sold out weeks beforehand – so have a go. It is *our* show.

Theatre

Benedict Nightingale

Silver Lining

Clouds *Duke of Yorks*
The World Turned Upside Down *Cottesloe*
Bar Mitzvah Boy *Her Majesty's*

Polonius was not quite the fool Hamlet tried to make him. After all, a cloud can twist and billow from camel to weasel to whale within moments. Indeed, it can remain perfectly motionless and still resemble camel, weasel or whale, depending on the mood of the watcher and the associations he brings to it. Clouds are Rorschach blots in flux, and so, perhaps, are other things, too. In the view of Michael Frayn's resonantly-titled play, the animate and inanimate furniture on terra firma around us is hardly less hazy and elusive. His characters spend some of their time gawping at the emblematic sky, but much more contemplating one another and the Cuba in which they're on journalistic safari; and nothing looks or feels the same for very long.

Consider Owen, a priggish, snarky scribe with an overbearing professional pride. When he meets Mara, who is in Castro country for a rival colour-mag, he mistakes her for a government guide and proceeds to softsoap her in a courtly pidgin. Learning that she's actually a lady novelist from South London, he turns patronising, then contemptuous, then very angry indeed. But she is only a 'manic-depressive amateur' and an 'absolute bloody disgrace to the newspaper industry' as long as she is closeting herself up for discussions-in-depth with the hispanic PRO. Once she has sensed the sexual envy beneath Owen's hostility, and made a preliminary stab at relieving it, each of them stops looking for what is black and ugly in the other's meteorology and starts mentally magnifying the size of the silver linings. Before long even the collective farms and fertiliser plants are seeming fresh and exciting. And so the process continues, both for them and for their companions, with cumulus replacing cirrus and nimbus cumulus, in constantly shifting conjunctions.

The play is, I suppose, a disquisition on the subjectivity of truth; but, Frayn being Frayn, it is very far from an arid one. For one thing, its encounters are marked by a spritely and sophisticated wit, and, for another, there's a kind of glandular unease somewhere behind them. Mara is self-absorbed and casually destructive, a woman born to dog men's minds, skewer their tripes, and then pass on, quite oblivious to the carnage in her wake. One moment, she is persuading her pet Cuban to unlock his family secrets and disclose his childhood bitternesses; the next, she is stirring up poor, tense, married Owen; and in neither case is she more than passingly involved. By the end she has provoked an unseemly brawl and got off with the grinning black chauffeur. 'Look at that sky, not a cloud in sight, pure light,' she babbles happily from the front seat, while her victims mope yellow-faced in the back, seeing little good in her, Cuba or the weather. The play's higher centres are very deft with ideas. At the same time, and even more interestingly, its id is shuddering with gynaecological dismay.

Tom Courtenay and Felicity Kendal are the love-lorn English, Mark Kingston a ra-ra American, and Frank Chapman their splendidly lackadaisical guide. The acting is not particularly ambitious, but it is unerringly acute and nicely orchestrated by the dependable Michael Rudman. What gives his production its originality is, however, the set. West End impressions have of late been making more and more use of the one raw material still unaffected by inflation, namely air; but this is the first time any has dared reduce a nation to half-a-dozen white chairs and a white table, surrounded by nothing but a blue cyclorama. And, of course, it works very well, whether the cast is asked to eat, drive, work on its typewriters, or simply sit and talk. More than that, it helps make Mr Frayn's point for him, because it proves that the imagination can transform the bits and pieces of an average middle-class kitchen into a car, a hotel, a government office, a new town, or (for all we know) a camel, weasel or whale. Reality is what we dupe ourselves into believing.

Set becomes total setlessness for Keith Dewhurst's *World Turned Upside Down*, which sends two years of Cromwellian history parading to and fro along a thin track between two tiers of seats, a sort of railway cutting hemmed in by banks of wind-blown knees. This involves the audience in a good deal of arching and craning, which it might find less painful if the dramatic rewards were solider. Unluckily, it is one of those evenings where breadth seems to count more than depth and spectacle more than analysis. Much is made of the extraordinary intricacy of the 17th-century firing squad at drill: 'shorten your scoring sticks', 'blow off your powder', and all. In order to be shot in those topsy-turvy days you had to endure a ritual nearly as elaborate and endless as the Trooping of the Colour. But such fascinating half-relevancies leave less time for what really matters, the political, economic and social pressures that gave the nation the Levellers and the Ranters, and the characters and motives of those who created and destroyed these omens of revolution. Indeed, the most one can reasonably say of the evening is that its alluring but skimpy glimpses might encourage the unsatisfied to look out the Christopher Hill tome from which it has been 'freely' adapted. They'll find it costs rather less than the saddle sores they are likely to have acquired in the Cottesloe.

Those who saw Jack Rosenthal's *Bar Mitzvah Boy* on television will remember a sometimes scathing and sometimes touching little play about an adolescent who takes his coming-of-age much more seriously than either his father, who regards it as an appalling expense and fuss, or his mother, for whom it is a social event only marginally less dazzling than the birthday of Bael. At the crisis he runs out of the synagogue rather than perpetuate a rite he has begun to think hypocritical. But musicals, especially expensive musicals, and above all expensive British musicals, invariably prefer to touch rather than scathe; and although the collaboration of Rosenthal, Jule Styne and Don Black has not smothered the original point in goo, it has gone rather further down that primrose path than one would have wished. The show isn't disagreeing with the parents when they sing 'We've done all right', meaning they've brought up their boy well, nor is it the least ironic about the father's tacky tribute to him, 'the sun shines out your eyes'. The message is clubby and chummy, a costly domestic version of *amor vincit omnia*: a pity.

Art

John Spurling

Not So Naif

Anthony Green *Royal Academy*
Scale for Sculpture *Serpentine*

Anthony Green looks momentarily like a naïve painter. His two-dimensional figures are caught in stiff poses in the foreground of acrobatically distorted perspectives. His colours jangle and squeak, while his shadows carry on an independent altercation with his light passages, the artist's own canvas, the reflections in his spectacles and the various miniatures his model wears tied round her throat. Finally, the canvases themselves come in odd shapes: tent-shaped, triangular, three points of an irregular star, hexagonal or curvilinear like the back of a chair. No naïve painter could possibly achieve such a range of violations of traditional figurative techniques, let alone be so artful in their combination.

To what end? The representation of reality being so much insisted on, and so ostentatiously played tricks with, induces a sense of unreality. We are carried past the world of surface appearances into a dream with the same ingredients. Whereas the dream-paintings of a Rousseau or a De Chirico use imaginative imagery with archetypal significance, Green's are deliberately mundane and private. The viewer peers not into his own unconscious but into a fish-tank from which Green himself, his wife, his relations or his neighbours stare out. The sense of exclusion is

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partly offset by Green's sense of humour – he shows the relations in their expensively hideous interiors and himself as the uxorious husband on successive wedding anniversaries. But the humour is really only a mode of self-satisfaction, as one might say 'I'm ridiculously in love with my wife' the better to draw attention to oneself. For the content of these paintings is very carefully controlled. They are day-dreams more than dreams. The viewer is asked to approach them not in his own persona, but clothed as it were in Green, in a spirit of collusion and temporary identification. 'Here you are, old chap, meet my folks, be me for a minute or two, it's hugely enjoyable.'

The trouble is that it's not; it becomes, in spite of a certain initial fascination, a dismal and isolating experience, a sense that one's common humanity is drowned in a personal lack of sympathy. This isn't merely a question of taste, of disliking the content of Green's world *per se*. If that were so, one would come away from a Beckett play with the same feeling. This experience is dismal because it is so limited, because Green reveals nothing beyond his satisfaction with the subject-matter and even that in the most superficial terms – his wife's nude or semi-nude body and his own sexual arousal, an elderly couple's pride in their new bathroom, his dream of being a racing cyclist. Green, in other words, is the mirror-image of a naïve painter. The naïve, somehow, through the very rawness of his means, may succeed in fetching up significance. Green's sophisticated means only serve to emphasise the unvarying triviality of his content.

Nicholas Monro's large fibre-glass group of Morecambe and Wise which was sited about this time last year in a corner of Regent's Park has since been removed by public demand. On the other hand, the present owner of Monro's *King Kong* – the original owner used it to advertise his garage – refused to lend it because it was an indispensable adjunct to his Sunday markets. Of his latest work at the Serpentine – one of five room-size exhibits by different artists – Monro says ruefully, 'I hope you will find yourself able to enjoy the *Morris Dance*.' The work consists of six separate figures, dressed in white, with bowler-hats, bells at the knee and red and yellow streamers, frozen in mid-caper. All the figures are different: one has a broad grin, white hair and blue eyes; another black-rimmed spectacles, closed eyes, black hair; another a serious expression, longish red hair and a wispy red moustache; and so on. All are in different positions of balance, their arms and the handkerchiefs they hold making different patterns in the air.

One might easily go on to discuss the piece in these terms as a serious work of art. But of course it's a joke, a caricature of naturalistic sculpture, of the whole idea of representing movement in stasis and soft materials in hard, and at the same time a parody of Merrie England. No wonder that Monro's ludicrously bland, commercially exploitable images cause such offence. We rely on art to be serious – whatever its other shortcomings. Furthermore, people take their parks seriously, as places of retreat from the modern world. Monro is out to rub our noses in the modern world, its pretentiousness, its acceptance of trash, its love of the ersatz, its nostalgia and sentimentality. Nor is he entirely against all these characteristics. Enjoy him if you can.

Weekend Competition

No 2540 Set by E. O. Parrott

With Arthur Marshall tackling our new comp anthology, it might be a good idea to have another lot of gruesome one-liners. After all, it was that 'No, Salome, not in the fridge' which provided his title last time. By 24 November. (Re last week's comp, 2539: those octosyllabics needn't rhyme after all.)

Result of No 2537 Set by Arthur Ritus

In *My Kind of Movie* various smallwigs discuss their favourite films: Sir Robert Mark on *The Way Ahead*, etc. What would the genuine celebs choose? Liszt on *Song Without End*, Mussolini on *Bicycle Thieves* . . .

Report by Spiro Keats

Reasons of space prevent me from belabouring you at much length this week. Some good ideas – Barry Anthony's 'Darwin on *Planet of the Apes*', Gracechurch's 'Mrs Beeton on *Last Tango*' ('At first I kept thinking they were wasting the basis of a good Dundee . . .') – but the execution was generally pretty weary. Try harder, please, if you would. A quid each to Anthony and Gracechurch, five of the same to our winners.

Goebbels on *Casablanca*

A wonderful moral film about honesty and justice! Courageous loyal servants of the Reich face the deceit and cupidity of international Jewry. Consider, please. Rick, clearly Jewish despite his assumed name and American accent, by exploiting a negro singer of tawdry sentimental songs, tricks an innocent Aryan girl into loving him, cynically abandons her to the Jew adventurer Laszlo and embarks on a life of luxury with his homosexual lover, Renault, who has become rich by profiteering while pretending to be on the side of humanity. Rick and his confederates continually negotiate for payment; the Germans think only of duty. Finally, Major Strasser, while selflessly serving the Reich, is shamefully done to death by the gangster methods of those he treated with courtesy and trust!

PETER ALEXANDER

Wagner on Visconti's *Ludwig*

This film's only really ruinous flaws are those few frames in which I, or rather the actor impersonating me, does not appear. This actor (a Gentile, mercifully), though competent, totally lacks the power to project those intimations of moral grandeur and transcendent sublimity of soul, of which all those vouchsafed the privilege of entering the magnetic field of my personality were instantly aware . . .To what extent was poor little Ludy loopy? The answer is plain. When spilling out his millions of marks on me, my operas, plans and dreams, he was absolutely sane. When squandering it on all that absurd castellated confectionery with which Bavaria is now bestrewn, he was clearly certifiable. It is a mistake to suppose that the *untermensch* necessarily inhabits the tenement or the ghetto: he may just as readily be found in a Palace. All that is certain is that he is furnished by Providence solely for the *ubermensch* to feed upon . . .

RUFUS STONE

Kipling on Lindsay Anderson's *If* . . .

My initial disgust on finding that the film did not in fact depict the life of Dr Leander Starr Jameson, the inspiration of my own trumpery verses with the same title, soon melted in the realisation that here was an educational establishment as sweetly repressive and delectably antediluvian as my own *alma mater*, Westward Ho! (Though nude matrons wandering absently through the dorms were *not* an amenity enjoyed by my generation). Punishments are, as they should be at all schools, both arbitrary and excessive – and there is a really superb swishing scene, with flagellations that are both things of beauty and joys forever. The central trio of boys are as ingenious as Stalky, Beetle and M'Turk and quite as good haters – for, verily, show me the man who can really hate and I will love him and cleave unto him to my days' end. The Head Beak is, of course, a windy, vapouring, liberal clap-trapper (how my toecap ached for his groin!) and the concluding episode when the parents are mown down as they come out of Chapel, aroused in me such vociferous excitation as led to my being forcibly ejected from the Cinema . . .

MARTIN FAGG

Tony Miles

Chess

No 108 The Two Jonathans

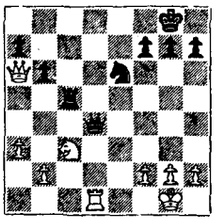
This year's British championship was, for the first time in many years, held in Scotland, at the Craigie College of Education just outside Ayr. Another novelty was that the event was sponsored by the stockbrokers Grieveson and Grant, to the extent that the British Champion was not the only person to cover his expenses.

From the start the main contenders were the Jonathans, Mestel and Speelman, both of the shoulder-length hair, straggly-beard, well worn jeans and T-shirt (*I have heard that some people* have difficulty distinguishing between them, but there is a simple method – Speelman is much larger, and, perhaps consequently, his T-shirts are usually a few sizes too small). Mestel, though, suffered two early setbacks, against Plaskett and Paul Littlewood, and seemed to be out of contention.

It was not until the penultimate round that a clear leader emerged in the person of the larger Jonathan. With one round to play he had 8/10, half a point ahead of his smaller namesake, who had made a remarkable recovery. In the last round Speelman played safe with a short draw against Webb, leaving Mestel with the task of beating Clarke to tie. After a hard struggle he was forced to concede the draw leaving Jonathan Speelman the new champion.

White: J Speelman Black: S Taulbut

1.P-QB4, P-KN3; 2.P-KN3, B-N2; 3.B-N2, P-K4; 4.N-QB3, P-Q3; 5.P-K3, N-QB3; 6.KN-K2, N-B3; 7.P-Q3, 0-0; 8.R-N1, B-K3; 9.N-Q5, BxN?; 10.PxB, N-K2; 11.Q-N3, P-B3; 12.PxP, PxP; 13.B-Q2, P-Q4; 14.0-0, Q-Q2; 15.KR-B1, P-KR4; 16.Q-R4, P-K5; 17.B-N4, PxP; 18.N-B4, P-Q5; Realising that all is not well with his position, Taulbut typically tries to stir up complications, but Speelman's sound and accurate play soon repulses the counterplay. **19.PxP, N-N5; 20.NxQP, QxP; 21.Q-R3!, NB4; 22.B-B5, Q-B3; 23.P-R3, N(5)-R3; 24.BxR, RxB; 25.RxP, Q-N4; 26.Q-R5, B-Q5; 27.R-B4, Q-B3; 28.R-B6, Q-N4; 29.R-Q6, B-N3; 30.Q-Q5, Q-Q7; 31.RxPch, K-R2; 32.RxB, PxR; 33.N-B4, Q-B7; 34.B-K4 Resigns.**



Black to play. Who stands better and why? Answers to me at the NEW STATESMAN postmarked not later than 22 November.

Solution to Problem 106

1.QxNch! KxQ; 2.N-N5ch, K-N1; 3.R-Q8ch! RxR; 4.B-B4ch, K-R1; 5.N-B7ch, K-N1; 6.NxBch, K-R1; 7.N-B7ch, K-N1; 8.N-Q5ch! K-R1 9.N-N6ch, PxN; 10.R-R1 mate.

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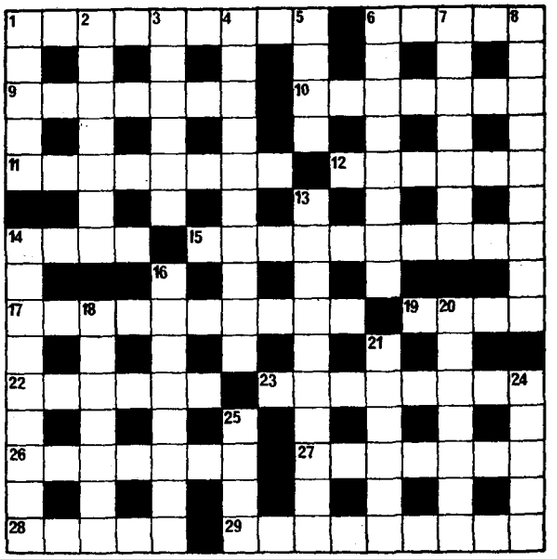
Weekend Crossword 1282

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1282, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 21 November.



ACROSS

1. Sporting occasion continued to be boring (9).
6. Pop stars need direction to make them become adult (5).
9. Wrongly call an Englishman a Frenchman (7).
10. Military man who has to join up if one is missing (7).
11. Clothing in which a woman wails (8).
12. Foreign refinement (6).
14. Times are bewildering, by the sound of it (4).
15. Ruses for discovering stones in layers (10).
17. The accommodation is ordered so nothing matters (10).
19. Brilliant beginning cut short (4).
22. Television line as a single row (6).
23. The ruler of a tribe discovers the noise a prisoner may make (8).
26. Come out and in France a title is given back (7).
27. 'All length is ——'(*Ant. and Cleo.*) (7).
28. He puts a woman on the street (5).
29. Concerned with relatives being opponents (9).

DOWN

1. Girls succeeded without me (5).
2. Craft of a woman holding her child (7).
3. Songs for the chief, we hear (6).
4. Authority for the present enclosing a road (10).
5. Frank is home having lost half an hour (4).
6. Permit in a happy place (8).
7. Opening inside door if I cease locking it (7).
8. Crooked car pusher gets a person to buy it (9).
13. The religious have worries about me burning (10).
14. Finds out cricket records? (9).
16. Without it the legacy would make a girl grow old (8).
18. It is mean to declare before time (7).
20. The magistrate holds a bone in the air (7).
21. Tangles and makes a surly noise (6).
24. Part of country where any number may be found with broken legs (5).
25. Animal which is back in the grass (4).

SETSQUARE

Solution to Salamanca 11

S	T	E	S	O	D	S	R	P	I	N	P			
C	T	H	R	R	T	E	A	N	I	T	B			
A	A	R	A	R	G	R	G	L	E	E	A			
Y	A	P	A	I	A	R	O	R	A	M	D			
O	E	N	S	D	A	T	O	R	A	M	O			
L	D	T	I	T	I	D	A	R	I	D	I			
D	E	S	I	C	A	V	A	L	O	T	E			
R	E	A	O	C	E	N	A	M	U	L	E			
L	T	B	T	R	T	N	E	R	A	W	E			
E	O	Y	A	H	E	T	T	T	I	N	D			
L	L	G	U	S	E	L	E	R	O	U	T			
E	E	S	E	R	E	R	Y	W	E	N	S			

Prizewinners to Salamanca 11

J. S. Parker (Surbiton)
I. A. Ross (Silverdale)
C. E. Hagley (High Wycombe)

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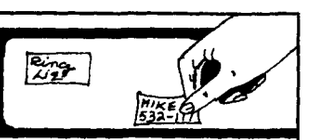

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This appointment requires the skills and knowledge to promote and develop staff organisations; train staff representatives; administer, research, advise upon and negotiate IR matters.

The Confederation has significant representation among professional, managerial, technical and clerical workers.

Cadidates should have extensive and current experience of trade union affairs, not necessarily as a union official. Work achievements are more important than qualifications but a relevant degree or diploma will be welcome.

Please write in strict confidence (including a telephone number), giving sufficient personal and career details to justify a preliminary discussion. Show how your appointments have contributed to your personal development, and to this application. No application forms will be sent.

Applications should be sent to the **Chairman, Confederation of Employee Organisations, 39 High Street, Wheathampstead, St Albans, Herts. AL4 8DG.**

SOCIETY OF CIVIL AND PUBLIC SERVANTS

Applications are invited for the following posts:

ORGANISING OFFICER

This post provides assistance to the Assistant General Secretary (Finance and Organisation) on organisational and recruitment matters, including responsibility for area organisation.

NEGOTIATIONS OFFICER

Applications are also invited for a post of Negotiations Officer.

For both posts experience in Civil Service or public sector trade union activity and of the Civil Service Whitley Council machinery is desirable. Ability to communicate effectively is essential.

The salary scale is £4,842, £4,995, £5,170, £5,345, £5,520, £5,718, to which Inner London Weighting of £465 p.a. should be added. Annual leave entitlement is thirty days and there is a non-contributory pension scheme. Retirement is compulsory at age sixty.

Applications for these appointments, which should include particulars of age, educational qualifications, present and previous employment and trade union experience, must be received not later than **Friday, 24 November 1978**, addressed to the

General Secretary, Society of Civil and Public Servants, 124/130 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0TU,

from whom application forms are available.
Applicants should specify for which post(s) they wish to be considered.

NATIONAL UNION OF BANK EMPLOYEES

appointment of

TRADE UNION ORGANISER

for the East Anglian area

Due to the transfer of the current organiser to another position within the union a vacancy has arisen in the East Anglia area for an organiser. Applications are invited from persons with suitable qualifications and Trade Union background for this vacancy.

Commencing salary £4,071 per annum rising to £4,990 per annum. Car provided, good holidays and Conditions of Service. Considerable travelling is involved in this appointment. The successful applicant would be based at the Union's Cambridge Office. Please apply for an application form by **Friday, 24 November 1978**, to **Mr John James, National Organiser, NUBE, 102 Bute Street, Cardiff CF1 6AD.**

COMMISSION FOR RACIAL EQUALITY

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER

LIAISON

The Commission for Racial Equality has a vacancy for a Senior Executive Officer in the Liaison Section of the Community Affairs and Liaison Division, which has primary responsibility for the CRE's duty to promote good relations between different racial groups. The person appointed will be responsible to the Principal and will co-ordinate the work of Liaison Officers, supervise administration of Liaison Section, advise the Principal Field Officer on minority organisations and their activities, maintain contacts with Regional Field Officers and through them with minority groups working with outside community relations councils, act as a link between the liaison section and other sections of the CRE, represent the CRE as appropriate at conferences held by minority groups and other organisations, and, in consultation with field officers, arrange national or regional conferences for ethnic minority groups.

Qualifications

The post is open to men or women with experience in the field of race relations, including experience and knowledge of the problems of minority groups in that field. A degree or similar qualification would be desirable.

Salary

The starting salary will be £5,937 per annum, rising by five annual increments to a maximum of £7,032 per annum, plus an Inner London Weighting Allowance of £465 per annum.

Please write for application form and further details, enclosing a large self-addressed envelope marked 'SEO Liaison' to The Commission for Racial Equality, 10/12 Allington Street, London SW1E 5EH. *Please note that completed application* forms must be returned to the CRE to reach them by 30 November 1978.

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GENERAL SECRETARY

Haringey CVS is looking for a person with a wide knowledge of social policy, voluntary and statutory services. Experience of working in the field of social action or community development essential.

This is a demanding and rewarding job working primarily with the non-statutory sector, consisting of small community groups, voluntary organisations, pressure groups and local trade unions. Freedom of thought and action are encouraged. Applicants should have initiative, imagination, organising ability, flexibility and a capacity for establishing good personal and public relations.
Salary range: £5,517-£5,853 inclusive.

Further details and application form: **Haringey Council for Voluntary Service, 66 Turnpike Lane, London N8 0PR. (01-889 7461). Closing date: Monday, 27 November 1978.**

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Assistant

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Salary on a scale starting from £4,824 per year rising to £6,390 including London weighting. Details from **General Secretary, TUC, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS.**

LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

ASSISTANT TO PROFESSIONAL SERVICES SECRETARY

The work is primarily concerned with salaries and conditions of service of Library Association members and relations with trade unions. Applicants should have experience of or interest in industrial relations and trade union negotiations. Experience of Library work useful but not essential. This is a new post and offers scope to develop this aspect of the Associations work. Salary scale on the range £3,578-£5,044 p.a. inclusive of London weighting. Further details from Miss Wallis, Library Association, 7 Ridgemount Street, London WC1. 01-636 7543. Closing date for applications 20 November 1978.

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LECTURER 1

in the

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Preference will be given to candidates with a background in Cultural/Economic Geography with research interests in one or more of the following: migration, information flow, settlements, use of services, social change, especially in rural environments. The appointee will be required to make a major contribution to the Social Studies course in the Arts Faculty Foundation Year. In addition the appointee will have teaching duties in some of the more advanced Geography courses. There are ample opportunities for research in Papua New Guinea and if appropriate the appointee will be encouraged to enrol for a higher degree. The contract period will be for two years in the first instance. Salary: K9,048-10,168 p.a. (£1 Sterling = K1.35). In addition, an allowance of K1,300 p.a. if single is payable. An extra K1,000 Marriage Allowance and K156 per child Child Allowance may also be payable. Conditions include provision of housing and annual leave fares. Detailed applications (2 copies) with curriculum vitae, naming 3 referees together with small photograph should be sent direct to Secretary, Box 4820, University PO, Papua New Guinea by 22 December 1978. Applicants resident in the UK should also send one copy to Inter University Council, 90/91 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 0DT. Further details may be obtained from either address.

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The emoluments of the Visiting Fellow will be determined by the Faculty Board within the range £1,250 to £2,000. The Board may also reimburse part or all of the cost of the Visiting Fellow's travel expenses.

Officers of the University of Cambridge are not eligible for the Visiting Fellowship.

Further information may be obtained from the Secretary, Judith E. Wilson Fund, Faculty Board of English, University of Cambridge, 9 West Road, Cambridge CB3 9DP, to whom applications, containing a curriculum vitae, should be sent so as to reach him not later than 8 December 1978.

Publications

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Spectator

EDGELL RICKWORD

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129 Charing Cross Rd, WC2
Wed. 15 Nov. 12-1.00 p.m.

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NEW STATESMAN

Vol. 96 No. 2486

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Theatres

ALDWYCH THEATRE (Royal Shakespeare Company) 836 6404 Info 836 5332. 'Coriolanus', Middleton & Rowley's 'The Changeling' & 'As You Like It'. See daily press for dates & times. RSC also at The Warehouse in Stephen Poliakoff's 'Shout Across The River', Mary O'Malley's 'Look Out . . . Here Comes Trouble!' and Pete Atkin's 'A & R'.

HAMPSTEAD THEATRE 722 9301. 'Comings and Goings' by Mike Stott, directed by Alan Dossor. Prevs from 9 Nov at 8 p.m.

NATIONAL THEATRE 928 2252. 'The Woman', 'The Double Dealer', 'The Cherry Orchard', 'Betrayal', 'The World turned upside Down' (not suitable for children). See daily press for dates and times or ring recorded information 928 2256.

ROYAL COURT 730 1745. Prev. Mon 13 Nov 8 p.m. Opens Tues 14 Nov 7 p.m. Subs Mon.-Sat. 8 p.m. 'Prayer for my Daughter' by Thomas Babe.

SUGAWN THEATRE, Duke of Wellington, Balls Pond Rd, N1. 'Tomorrow Comes December', a new play by J. M. O'Neill. 14-17, 20-23, 27, 28 Nov., 4-7 Dec. Phone 249 3729 or 254 1446. Adm. £1.10. Members £1. Curtain up 8 p.m.

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Poetry

AMBIT/CAMDEN Poetry reading. 9 November, 8 p.m. Chalk Farm Library, Sharples Hall St, NW1. The readers are: Gavin Ewalt, Taner Baybars, Diane Hendry. Tkts 30p.

Meetings

'INTERVENTION to protect minorities' — Minority Rights Group Annual Lecture by Prof. James Fawcett, President of European Human Rights Commission, 6.30 on 29 November at 10 St James's Sq, SW1.

'THE NATURE OF TRUTH'. A talk by Dr Hugh Gray, 7 p.m. Sun. 12 Nov. 1978. The Theosophical Society in England, 50 Gloucester Place, London, W1H 3HJ. Tel. 01-935 9261.

RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA CENTRE, Blind Lane, Bourne End, Bucks. Sun. 12 Nov, Swami Tripurananda 'Schools of Indian Philosophy; their Common Basis' at 4 p.m. All welc. Vedanta mag 50p.

'THE END OF THE SECRET GARDEN? A STUDY OF THE POLITICS OF THE CURRICULUM'

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Barnett Shine Foundation Lecture

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THE REFORM OF DIRECT TAXATION Conference, Sunday 12 November, 10.45-5.15, Kenilworth Hotel, 97 Great Russell St, WC1. Chairman: David Blake. Speakers: James Meade, John Kay, Brian Reddaway, David Heald, Donald Ironside, Jack Sieve, Andy Thompson, Mervyn King. Tickets £2 (£1 members) from Fabian Society, 11 Dartmouth St, SW1 (930 3077) or at door.

CENTRAL LONDON FABIAN SOCIETY. *Tom Crowe on 'Microprocessors and the Electronics Revolution'.* 5 Tavistock Pl, WC1, Wed. 15 Nov., 7.30. All welc.

INCOME, WEALTH and the Diamond Commission. Conference Saturday 11 November, 10.45-5.00 Bloomsbury Centre Hotel, Coram Street, WC1. Chairman: Michael Meacher. Speakers: Dorothy Wedderburn, Jim Kincaid, David Piachaud, Chris Pond, John Flemming. Tickets £2 (£1 members) from Fabian Society, 11 Dartmouth Street SW1 (930 3077) or at door.

THEOSOPHY: Sae for pamphlets, book list, programme of activities. Sun. 12 Nov. 8 p.m. Open Question/Answer Meeting. Wed. 15 Nov. 7.30 p.m. Commemoration 'The Theosophical Movement'. ULT, 62 Queen's Gdns, London W2.

Courses

SACU TOURS TO CHINA 1979. The programme of tours arranged for 1979 by the Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding includes General Tours, Study Tours for those with a special interest in Science, *Education, Medicine, Economics and Environmental issues*, and a tour for young people via the Trans-Siberian railway, and covers 24 centres in 20 provinces of China. *Further details are now available from:* The Tours Organiser, SACU, 152 Camden High Street, London NW1 0NE. Tel. 01-485 8236.

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(Apologies for incorrect dates shown last week)

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